

SALTY

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1659

Printed in Great Britain

To
HENRY WESTCOTT

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FOREWORD

TO THEM AS READS THIS BOOK

THIS 'ere book is really doo to me. The yarns ain't wrote down exactly as I told 'em, nor yet so good neither, but so long as I gets my rightful it don't make no difference. I ain't particular.

Wot I likes about the book is that it don't do me nothing but credit, being different to another book which I once 'ad to do with.

A gentleman used to come out with me in my boat, *Salty*, which were the same as I owns now, being a eighteen-foot open boat (fore-sail, main-sail, and mizzen), and this 'ere gentleman, he once says to me: 'Trimble,' he says, 'would you like for to be made immortal?'

'Well, sir,' I says, 'me being caretaker down to the Young Men's Club and well-knowned as the straightest and most dependable man on the beach, I reckon there ain't no call for me to worrit about such things.'

'Wot I means,' he says, larfing, 'is, would

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you like to be put in a book so as you would be knowed far and wide, and them as runs could read about you ?'

' So long as I gets my proper terms,' I tells him, ' which is 'arf-a-crown an hour or part of an hour, lines and bait being extra, I'm agreeable.'

Well, this 'ere gentleman, he did make a little book, and he sent it to me and a five pound note along with it. It were a tidy-enough little book, though it 'adn't got no pictures in it, but the reading was the stupidest reading I ever come acrost in all my life.

The gentleman didn't know a brig from a schooner, let alone a brigantine; he didn't know port from starboard; he didn't know the difference between putting of your hellum up and putting of your hellum down; he didn't know a bass from a mackerel. I never see such ignorance.

But I admits free that wot upset me most was that, arter all his talk, he never put me into the book at all. He put all my yarns into he mouth of a low-down, deceiving sort of sailor-man as I wouldn't care to be seen along of.

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I suppose the gentleman reckoned that, if he put me in the book the same as he said he would, I should be asking for more than the five pound he sent me. He needn't 'ave troubled 'isself about that. If that book were worth five pound I ain't no judge of the value of money.

This 'ere book is a considerable better book than wot that was.

OLIVER TRIMBIE.

THE JIGGER

OLIVER TRIMBLE groped for the ha'penny I had dropped, and returned it to me with a beaming smile.

'I can't abear anything that isn't straight,' he said. 'Straight I 'ave been, straight I am, and straight I shall always be—barring accidents, of course—to my last breath. There's few straighter men than wot I am, and that makes it all the more curious that I should so often be accused to the contrary. There ain't a shadow of excuse for it either. 'Arf-a-crown an hour or part of an hour is my terms. You can read it for yourself on this 'ere little card as I always carries about in my pocket—wrote down beautiful by a young feller as I once stood a pint to. A gentleman like you wouldn't 'ardly believe 'ow some folks can lower theirselves.

"Ho, boatman!" they says, when I asks or my rightful, "why, we 'ave only been out

THE JIGGER

for a few minutes over the hour. Look at that there church clock."

'Can I 'elp it if it takes a few minutes longer to make the beach than wot I may 'ave judged? A man can't do no more than his best, and I never set up to be perfect. Besides, winds and tides is well-known to be deceiving things. I didn't make 'em. If I 'ad my way there wouldn't be no such things as winds and tides, I can tell you.'

'Curious enough though, the worst case of dishonesty I ever come acrost 'ad nothing at all to do with this 'ere boat, but commenced in the beginning through my picking up a jigger when I were making my last voyage as a sailor-man and were in the West Injies.

'You don't know wot a jigger is? Why, a jigger is a sort o' hinseck as sets 'issel' to lay a hegg in the skin of your foot. In doo time that there hegg 'atches and commences for to grow into a jigger, and this 'ere jigger winds 'issel round the bones of your foot in an 'orrible manner. Directly the jigger has grapped a bone good and tight, that particular bone ain't of no further use, and never will be neither.

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‘The skipper of the vessel I were aboard of, he tells me about them jiggers. “If you goes ashore barefoot, you swab,” he says in the rude way natural to ’im, “you are liable to pick up a jigger, though, according to my reckoning, it would be a funny sort of jigger as would fancy a foot like yours.” ’Owever, there was no call to take any notice of wot he said, so, contrary to my usual, I did go ashore barefoot.

‘Nothing didn’t ’appen so far as I knowed, but, on the voyage ’ome, my foot began to itch. I didn’t take no particular notice. There ain’t nothing in itching. Most anybody is liable to itch occasional, and no harm done. Besides, I’d forgot all about them jiggers long afore that.

‘We came ’ome and was paid off, and I came down ’ere to set up as the best-liked and most dependable boatman on the beach, and all the time the itching in my foot were getting worse and worse. I spent considerable out of my ’ard-earned savings buying corn-cures and such like, but they weren’t no good. In the end I ’ad to go to a doctor, and this ’ere doctor turned out to be the most dishonest feller as ever I met in all my life.

THE JIGGER

‘He were a young chap with smooth ’air and a bit of moustache that looked as if it ’ad been stuck on to his lip with gum, which very like it ’ad, ’im being deceiving in many ways.

“Wot’s the matter with you?” he asks.

“I ’ave a ’orrible itching in my foot,” I tells him.

“You ’ave been drinking,” says he.

“I ’ave not,” I says.

‘He never even looked at my foot. “Soap and water,” he says. “And I’ll give you a dose as will clear your system, and not before you wants it, neither.”

‘Now I don’t say his physic were hocussed in a regular police-court manner, but hocussed it were in a manner of speaking; and to that I swears. There’s few physics I ain’t tasted in my time, and some is worse than others; but I never knowed physic behave like that before or since. People seems to delight in getting bad in this ’ere boat, but I never knowed anybody so bad as I were along of that hocussed physic. It didn’t do me a bit of good either. My foot didn’t get any better; and, arter a few days, I was forced to go back to the doctor.

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"Then I'll 'ave it done awake," I says, "and save 'arf the money."

"It will 'urt something 'orrid," says the doctor.

I didn't want to be 'urt 'orrid, but I thought of all the pints the money would buy, and I stuck to my guns.

"You are sure?" asks the doctor.

"Sartin sure," I tells him.

I don't wish to 'arrer up your feelings with what took place when the jigger were outed, so all I will tell you is this—that the doctor 'adn't gone very far with his corkscrew, when all of a sudden I went blind to the world and knowed no more.

When I come round, the doctor gave me some stuff which weren't hocussed. "'Ow d'ye feel?" he asks.

"Bad," I says, "very bad."

"Lie still," he says, "and you will soon feel better," which I did.

"How about the jigger?" I asks after a few minutes.

"Cast your eye up to that shelf," he says, pointing.

THE JIGGER

'I does so, and there were the jigger in a glass bottle, looking considerable like wot I reckoned he oughter.

"Look 'ere!" says the doctor, "You 'ave been so brave I shan't charge you nothing at all for this 'ere hoperation, and here's a suvrin for yourself."

"Thank ye, sir," I says, very perlite.

"I reckon you are well enough to go now," he says.

"Yes," I says.

"Wot are you a-waiting for then?"

"For my jigger," I tells him.

"Not by a long chalk," says the doctor; "the jigger belongs to me."

"Why, doctor," I says, "'ow can you say such a thing? Nothing could belong to anybody more than the jigger do to me."

"I ain't going to part with 'im anyway," says the doctor.

He stuck to that there jigger. No doubt the jigger were worth considerable money, and the doctor knowed it. He've a-got the jigger up at his 'ouse now, and shows him round to most all

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the folks as calls. When he ain't got nothing to do I expects he just sits and studies over the jigger, and laughs to think of 'ow he robbed a poor, 'ard-working man.

' I can't abear doctors.'

III

THE BAND

THE strains of a band were wasted to our ears
over the still waters of the bay.

“ ‘Tis wonderful, isn’t it,’ said Oliver Trimble,
‘how sound carries over water? You wouldn’t
think we were better nor a mile from that band,
would you? Not but what ‘tis a good band,
with fine instruments, as I ‘appen to know,
In a manner of speaking, I made that there band.

‘ It came about through a new parson being
sent to this ‘ere place. Uff, his name were,
and in them days he were a pleasant-spoke sort
of feller who ‘ad many points in his favour.
One of the first things he did was to start
Young Men’s Club, and, me being well-kne
as the straightest and most dependable man on
the beach, he offered me the job of caretaking
the ‘ouse which were rented for the young men.

‘ I accepted the job, and went to live in the
‘ouse—in fact, I still does live in the ‘ouse, and

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a wearing job I has there. There's few would go caretaking the same as I does arter a 'ard day's work, let alone the constant argifyng with parson about this and that, and me not going to church as often as what he might think proper.

' When parson first came there weren't no orgin in the church the same as there is now, but only a middling 'armonium. In fact, we was considerable backward in a good few ways, the old parson 'aving been a gentleman, and all for peace and quiet.

' This 'ere Mr Uff set 'imself to alter all that, but I were against it.

" "Parson," I says, " for 'evin's sake let well alone and go slow. You 'ave started this 'ere Young Men's Club which I am caretaking of, and your dooty is to make a success of the club, and not go rampaging after orgins. There's a considerable lot wants doing at the club, and every penny you can raise ought to go in there."

' Just as I said this the Salvation Army 'appened to pass. Parson looks at 'em, and he says, " That there Salvation Army has a tidy sort of crowd 'anging around most times."

THE BAND

"It are so," I says, "and natural too. They 'ands out the goods 'otter and stronger than you do, but, if you ask me, 'tis chiefly doo to their band."

"I believe you are right," says parson. "I always said that the 'armonium up to the church weren't stimulating enough, and that's why I am anxious to get an orgin."

"A band and a orgin," I says, "is remarkable different. A orgin is most always played by the parson's sister, and a band is played by pretty near so many fellers as there is hinstrements to blow on."

"You'm right," says parson.

"Besides," I tells 'im, "the sounds is different. A band is more rumbustious than wot an orgin is."

"An orgin is considerable rumbustious if so played," says parson, argifyng.

"Anyway, us ain't got an orgin," I says, short-like.

Parson scratches his 'ead.

"Wot's to hinder us from 'aving a band? A band wouldn't come near so dear as a orgin," he says.

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"Blowed if I 'adn't forgot the drum!" he says.

"Why, a drum," I says, "is the most rumbustious hinstryment of all."

"You'm right once more," he says. "We must 'ave a drum for sartin."

"Besides," I says, "I always 'ad a fancy for playing on a drum myself. If I was to play on the drum I shouldn't charge you nothing for my time."

"Capitall" he says, larsing in a 'armless way. "Capitall!"

Well, to cut a long story short, parson scratched round and got enough money to buy the hinstryments; and, arter I 'ad talked to the fellers down to the Young Men's Club, there weren't no particular difficulty in getting volunteers—in fact, quite the contrary. Then parson got the fellers some larning from an old chap who taught music and reckoned he knowed a bit about most all hinstryments, he 'aving been in a band himself in his young days. I 'ad a few lessons on the drum myself; but, to my way of thinking, there ain't no call to learn a drum, and it come to few 'ot words afore I were

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able to settle down comfortable. If you have a dependable man at the drum, the best way is not to worrit 'im, but leave him to do his best according to sarcumstances.

'Parson reckoned the band were to 'ave its first go off in the church, playing Christmas carols; and everything was going satisfactory when trouble was caused by a young feller joining the club that 'adn't belonged to it afore. This young feller were generally knowed as 'Arry—such being his name—and he weren't over and above bright in his wits by any manner of means, but he 'ad a remarkable talent for playing toons on a comb, and that's what caused the trouble. I noticed that he seemed to grow more peculiar in his 'abits every day, sitting about in corners, muttering to himself; and one day he came up to me. "Look 'ere, why ain't I in this 'ere band?" he asked me.

"Why, 'Arry," I says, "what put that thought into your 'ead?"

"'Ave you never 'eard of my talents with a comb?" he says.

"'Arry," I tells 'im, "your talents with a comb is well-knowned; but if you ask me why

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you ain't in the band, I tell you straight that a comb ain't a reglar hinstryment."

"I can play better than the band do," he says. "I can play most any toon on my comb, and the band, with all their larning, can only play two or three toons, and them not proper."

"You are talking of things that is too 'igh for you, 'Arry," I tells 'im.

"But, though I said this, I reckoned there were considerable truth in what he said, he being an amazing fine player on the comb, and the band—barring me with my drum—not being so good as what they might be later on. I thought it over, and in the end I showed 'Arry to parson, and 'Arry played the " 'Erald Angels" in a way that fair astonished him.

"Is that there comb of yours an ornary comb?" asks parson.

"Yes," says 'Arry. "It are the same I combs my 'air with most every morning. 'Ave a blow at 'im yourself, parson! You won't 'urt him."

"He makes sounds astonishing like a oh-boy," says parson, "and if I 'ad knowed of your amazing talent I would 'ave given you a

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chance at the oh-boy. But 'tis too late now, Bill 'Ookway 'aving been told off for the oh-boy."

" " I wants to play my comb," says 'Arry, " not the oh-boy."

" " Well, you can't," says parson, " not in my church anyway, though I'm sorry for it, and that I owns."

" I reckoned that, after this, 'Arry would quiet down, but he didn't. He got worse and worse; and, whenever the band tooned up at the Young Men's Club, he behaved hisself 'orrid, gritting his teeth in as nasty a way as ever I see. You would 'ave thought he would be grateful to me; but, instead of that, he seemed to have a particular spite against me and my drum. He said it weren't fair that I should be inside the band with my drum while he were outside with his comb, me and 'im being in the same boat, in a manner of speaking, by reason of neither of us taking any stock in wrote-down music, but playing permiscuous from the 'art.

" I began to worry about that there drum. A few jabs with a knife makes a tidy bit of difference to even the best of drums, and the

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drum being kept, along with the other hinstryments, at the Young Men's Club (which I were caretaking of), there were only me to stop 'Arry from jabbing the drum if so inclined, which I reckoned he were. Yes, I 'ad a fair worritting time with that there drum, and many's the night I 'ave left my warm bed through thinking false that 'Arry had broke in and were prowling round with his knife. 'Owever, nothing 'appened and, when Christmas came along, the band had the "'Erald Angels" most perfect, and "When Shepherds Watched" and a few others middling good.

'The carols were fixed for Christmas Eve at eight o'clock, and a couple of hours afore that time I put the hinstryments (barring the drum, which there weren't room for) on to a 'and-cart, wheeled 'em up to the church, and left 'em locked up in the vestry. I then went back, fetched the drum, and locked it up likewise.

"Now," says I to myself, "a drop something short won't do you no 'arm nor th 'Erald Angels' either."

"But it were not to be. Going through th

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churchyard in the moonlight, I saw a figge behind one of the tombstones. "'Arry," I says with a start, and 'Arry it were.

"What are you doing 'ere?" I asks sternlike.

"That's my business," says 'Arry.

Without saying a word I turned right round, went back to the church, and settled myself to watch my drum the same as the shepherd watched their flocks. When the band came into the vestry they weren't 'arf surprised, I can tell you, to find me watching like any old dog.

"Now, no tooning up, boys," I says, as I 'ands out the instrumets. "Remember you are in a church, and what you 'aven't learned afore, you ain't likely to pick up now."

The church were pretty near full when we filed in, and I saw 'Arry right in front with a silly smile on his face. Parson came in, looking mortal pleased, and gave out the first carol which were, of course, the "'Erald Angels.' All the people stood up, and 'Arry stood up along with 'em and took his comb out of his pocket. The old feller that 'ad bin learning

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the band waved his stick, but, instead of the wolume of sound we was all expecting, the only sounds came from my drum and 'Arry's comb. The people was too took aback to sing, and I don't blame them either. There was all the fellers in the band (barring me) blowing fit to bust theirselves, and not making no more noise than if they 'adn't blowed at all.

'Well, me and 'Arry carried on with the " 'Erald Angels," and I 'ave my doubts whether it weren't all for the best. 'Arry played on his comb a fair treat and—though I ain't one to boast—when I says I did my dooty by that there drum you can lay to it my dooty I did. I never could understand why parson stopped us at the end of the second verse, and set his sister to play the 'armonium for the rest of the carols. Several—and good judges some of 'em—said that the " 'Erald Angels" "ad never been played in the church arf nor quarter as well as me and 'Arry played them.

'Of course, them hinstryments 'ad bin in by 'Arry, he 'aving climbed in through the vestry winder while I were away fetching the drum. 'Ow did he do them in? Simple. He

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stopped them up with wedges of wood drove in good and tight. I sometimes think that all 'Arry's talk about the drum 'ad been deceitful, and that he all along meant to stop up them hinstryments so as to give my drum and his comb a chance.

'Owever, that were the end of the church-band. Parson sold all the hinstryments cheap to the old feller that 'ad been larning the band. The old feller, he set to and started a band to play on the beach, and some of them hinstryments you are listening to now is the very same as I 'ave been telling you about. The drum is the same drum I used to play on: the oh-boy is the same oh-boy Bill 'Ookway used to play on.

'Arry plays on that there oh-boy now. At this 'ere moment 'Arry is a-standing on that there beach a-blowing into Bill 'Ookway's oh-boy.'

IV

THE GROWER

'Now you 'ave lost your 'at,' said Oliver Trimble, calmly watching my straw as it bobbed away to leeward. 'It is no good worritting about it for it ain't worth it. Fortunately, the sun ain't shining. A gentleman in my boat once lost his 'at similar to you, and his 'ead were that bald and shiny that when the 'ot sun caught on to it the coastguards thought we was heller-grassing to 'em.

'You wouldn't think, would you?' he continued, 'that a man could make a new set of sails and a second-and pair of oars out of a bald 'ead, yet that is what I once did, and if I 'adn't been robbed I should have made a fortune as well, and not 'ave to work 'ard for my living like I does now.

'It 'appened along of a young seller called George, who had a very 'andsome 'ead of ginger-coloured 'air, of which he was very proud.

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This 'ere George went before the mast for voyage to the West Coast, and when he cam back he 'ad no 'air left that you could properl call 'air at all.

"Why, George," I said, when I saw 'im "what 'ave you been doing to yourself? Yo 'ave no more 'air left than wot a hegg 'ave."

"I took a fever bad when I were out on th West Coast, and it grupped on to my 'ead s that all my 'air come away sudden," says George

"Never mind, George," I says, cheerful like, "you won't 'ave to waste good mone having your 'air cut."

George didn't seem to like this, and I say he was grieving over his beautiful ginger 'ai that he 'adn't got no more.

"'Tis a pity," I says, "that you didn't know my grandmother."

"Why so?" he asks.

"Because," I says, "my grandmother were a white witch, and 'ad cures for most everything which she made out of leaves and such-like."

"'Ad she a cure for a bald 'ead?" he asks.

"She 'ad," I tells 'im, "or so I reckons

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but, as she died more than forty years ago, it don't signify."

" Didn't she leave the business to anybody ? " asks George.

" No," I says, " but she left a lot of old papers. I 'ave got them 'ome in a box, and maybe the bald-'ead cure is wrote down on one of 'em."

" I wish you would look," he says.

I felt sorry for George, so I said that if he were agreeable to pay for my time—'arf-a-crown an hour or part of an hour being my terms—I would turn out the box. George grew very excited, and, 'aving been paid off recent, he made no particular objection to my terms, and 'anded over 'arf-a-crown.

When I got 'ome I set to on the box, but I couldn't find any bald-'ead cure nor nothing like it, and I were just about to give up George's 'ead in disgust, when something 'appened to catch my eye.

It were a bottle of physic on the mantelpiece which I 'ad bought from Fergusson, the Scotch chemist ('im as used to keep the corner shop), for a corf I 'ad caught, earning my living in all weathers. I 'ad swallered only one go of this

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'ere physic owing to the 'orrible way it ha
burned my throat, and me and Fergusson ha
'ad a few words by reason of his refusing t
give me back my monecy. When I saw th
bottle it seemed a pity to waste it. Beside
I thought it more than likely that, being or
common 'ot and stimilating, it might do George
'ead a considerable deal of good; so I turne
the stuff into another bottle, and the next da
I put the bottle in my pocket.

' George came running up and asked me if
'ad got the paper.

" Better than that, George," I tells 'im
" Nobody but me could possibly onderstan
proper wot I found in the box, so I 'ave set t
and made you a bottle myself, and 'ere it is
I thinks," I says, " that you will find it very 'c
and stimilating, and I won't charge you n
more than another 'arf-a-crown for it. Rub i
in 'ard with the palm of your 'and most as ofte
as you feels inclined, George."

' George paid up the 'arf-a-crown and too
away the bottle, and I thought no more abou
it; but a few days afterwards he asked me to
look at his 'ead. I did so, and I said, " I don'

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wish to raise false 'opes, George, such not being my way, but, in my opinion, something is 'appening to your 'ead."

"I thinks so myself," says George, "but I 'ardly dares to 'ope."

"A bottle as 'ot and stimilating as what I gave you," I says, "is capable of a lot, but keep it close, George. Say nothing at all about it."

"All right," says George, "but I want another bottle."

"Another bottle you shall 'ave," I says, "but it will come a little dearer, the stuff in the bottle being 'ard to get, and my time valyable this time of the year."

George said he didn't mind three-and-six in a good cause, so I went off to Fergusson, the chemist, and bought another bottle of his corf-cure for a shilling.

"You 'ave changed your mind about that corf-cure?" says Fergusson.

"I 'ave," I says. So I 'ad.

I sold the bottle to George, and in a few days there weren't no doubt about it. As tidy a lot of 'airs as ever I see was sprouting up all over his 'ead. George was fair beside 'issel for joy.

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' I went round to Fergusson again and aske for three bottles of corf-cure.

' " You seem amazing fond of that corf-cure, he says, looking at me 'ard.

' " I am," I says. " I admits free that th corf-cure has done me more good than any on would guess. No doubt the 'ot, stimilatin taste I didn't like at first is what really does th good. I wouldn't be without the corf-cure now,

' " Look 'ere," says Fergusson, " if you wi write out a bit of paper saying 'ow bad you wa and 'ow my corf-cure 'as made you into a entirely new man, I would sell you a few bottle without making any charge."

' So there, in the shop, I wrote what he tol me, and he put the paper in his window, an 'anded over 'arf-a-dozen bottles. I emptie them all into one big one, and by the tim George had finished it he 'ad a wonderful 'ea of 'air, as good as ever in his life, and better too.

' Of course it got about, and I weren't alto gether surprised when Fergusson came roun to my place. I smelled a rat immediate. There few can smell a rat quicker than wot I can.

' " Good evening, Mr Fergusson!" I say

THE GROWER

very perlite. "Wot can I do for you? 'Appen you wants a bit o' sport in the way of fishing."

"No," he says, "'tis like this. I hear you 'ave some stuff that 'as growed 'air on George's bald 'ead."

"It ain't nothing to do with you," I says.

"Don't you be too sure," he says; and he went on to mention he didn't reckon the stuff were any good, but, if I liked to tell 'im what it were made of, a few shillings shouldn't stand between us.

I was fair disgusted. "A few shillings!" I cried. "Say no more, for your words is ridiculous."

Fergusson went away, but he came back again next day, and the day after that, and the day after that. I played 'im the same as I would a big bass in the 'arbour; and, in the end, he offered me two pound down and a share in any profits he might make.

"Now, look 'ere, Mr Fergusson," I t him, "I ain't one to 'aggle, such not way. "My last words is this. 'Y over ten pound 'ere and now you the bald-'ead cure wrote down proper on a

SALTY

piece of paper and done up neat in a enverlopf
You then takes the enverlope back to yo
shop and opens it, and—well, there's an er
to the whole thing."

" You must take me for a fool," he say
being took all aback.

" I take you for a 'onest man," I says, " th
same as I am myself."

" Why can't I open the enverlope 'ere ? " I
asks.

" Because," I says, " if you does you wi
start argifyng, and I can't abear argifyng.
worrits me. Besides, you ain't the only chemis
as wants the bald-'ead cure—not by a long chal
neither."

In the end he gave in. He 'anded over th
ten pounds, and I 'anded over an enverlope
stuck down all correct, with "*Your own corf-cure*"
wrote down clear and plain on a piece of pape
inside.

I went right away and bought a new set o
sails and a second-hand pair of oars which I ha
id my eye on for some time, and I paid for 'em
own on the nail for fear of accidents.

Of course, I reckoned that Fergusson would

THE GROWER

come rampaging round next day; but he didn't. He never came at all: and, a few weeks afterwards, I 'appened to cast my eye into his shop-window, and I never 'ad a bigger surprise in all my life. The window were cram-full of bottles with "FERGUSSON'S FAMOUS 'AIR-GROWER'" on 'em, and there was two large pictures of George in the window too, one a-showing of 'im as he were when bald-eaded (and took to please his mother), and the other showing of 'im with the beautiful 'air wot I 'ad growed on his 'ead. Most everybody took to talking about it; and, George being well-liked, all the bald folks round about began to rub the 'air-grower into their 'eads.

'Now it were but natural I should feel 'urt at Fergusson taking all the credit for my idears, let alone the 'arf-crowns pouring in for the bottles; but I didn't exactly see my way to do anything, so I 'ad to suffer silent. 'Owever, I were one day out in this 'ere boat with a bald-eaded gentleman, and I were telling 'im about George, when he says, "'Ad this George anything in the nature of a fever afore he lost his 'air?'"

""He 'ad so," I says. "It were a fever sure enough which grapped the 'air orf his 'ead."

SALTY

"Then," says the gentleman, "the grower 'ad nothing at all to do with his growing. 'Air most generally do come a' natural if grupped of by a fever."

I thought over the gentleman's words, I saw my dooty as a 'onest man plain afore I went round to Fergusson, the chemist, once.

"I suppose you want another bottle corf-cure," he says, larfing.

"Mr Fergusson," I says, "I come 'ere a 'onest man and wot I 'ave to say is no m than my dooty. Me and you knows a thing two about 'air-growers, but I 'ave learn something to-day I didn't know afore. T grower 'ad nothing whatever to do with Georg 'air. His 'air come back natural, 'aving b grupped of by the fever. As a 'onest man I says, "and not 'aving any share in the profit I don't see my way altogether clear to let fol think otherwise."

He turned on me 'ot and angry.

"'Ow dare you threaten me?" he shout. "Out of my shop with you! Say what you like. It don't matter to me! George is only one!"

THE GROWER

'undreds! I 'ave stacks of letters saying what amazing 'eads of 'air the grower has growed! Put that in your pipe and smoke it, and then go and drown yourself!"

'It ain't no good argyfying with a man like that, so I went away to turn the whole matter over in my mind; and, a few weeks afterwards, while I was still turning it over and not getting much forrader, Fergusson shut up his shop for good and went away to London.

'You can read about the grower now in any newspaper you buy, and there's great bills about it stuck up all over the country. You must 'ave seen 'em yourself. You can't very well 'elp seeing them.

'George's pictures is on the bottles now, one forrad and t'other ast; and, as for George, he took his 'ead to Lunnon some time back. No doubt Fergusson wanted to have George 'andy to show his 'air to them that had their doubts.

'The sails and oars wot I made out of the grower is the same sails and oars as I 'ave in the boat now. The oars is only middling, but I don't say nothing against the sails, and never 'ave neither.'

V

THE PIPE

OLIVER TRIMBLE, sitting in the bows of the good boat *Salty*, caught my eye and laughed,

‘Yes, sir,’ he said, ‘tis a curious pipe and no mistake. Many a gentleman has ‘ad a ‘arty larf over it. The bottom screws out, as you see, so that, when I has a fill, the baccy all goes through into the palm of my ‘and. Afore now I ‘ave most emptied a gentleman’s pouch that way with ‘im looking on all the time and not knowing nothing at all about it.

‘There’s a history belonging to the pipe too,’ he continued, after lighting up; ‘I didn’t buy it and I didn’t ‘ave it given to me. I won it—fair and square, I did—out of one of them ran’ pages as they calls lucky draws.

Parson came to me one evening down to the Young Men’s Club what I caretakes for ‘im, and he says to me, “Trimble,” he says, “tis bout time we rose some fun’s for this ‘ere club.”

THE PIPE

““ I’m with you, sir,” I says, “ and ’arty too. The club is fair starved for want of fun’s, and the caretaker along with it.”

““ I was thinking of a bazaar,” he says, “ if you know wot that is.”

““ Few better,” I says.

““ Some calls it a sale of work,” he says.

““ It don’t make much difference,” I says, “ but bazaar is the proper, reglar name for it, and that you can lay to.”

““ We will ’ave it in the church-school,” he says, “ and I reckons to raise a tidy bit by selling things for considerable more than they are worth. But, of course, we must ’ave some side-shows as well. There’s bran-tubs, and reciting, and ’aving your fortune told ’armless.”

““ And raffles,” I says.

““ I don’t ‘old with raffles,” says parson, “ them not being religious; but there’s lucky draws.”

““ Wot’s a lucky draw?” I asks ‘im.

““ Well,” he says, “ suppose you gets son body to give a pipe worth say three and six, a sells twenty tickets for a bob each, and the vning ticket takes the pipe—that’s a lucky draw

SALTY

“ That’s a raffle,” I says.

“ No, it ain’t,” he says short-like. “ ‘Tis a lucky draw and my own idear.”

“ Then,” I says, “ ‘tis a remarkable bright idear, and does you credit, if I may make so bold.”

“ I shall reckon on you, Trimble,” he says, “ to ‘elp make the bazaar a success.”

“ I’m ‘art and soul with you, sir,” I tells him.

Not long after that I ‘appened to go into the baccy-shop Mr Purt keeps, and he, being perlite by nature and different to some I could name, says, “ ‘Ere’s a curious pipe, Trimble!” and he shows me this ‘ere very identical pipe. He told me it were a remarkable good pipe, being made of extra special wood, but he ‘adn’t no particular demand for it, owing to its peculiar screw-bottom.

“ I can well believe that, Mr Purt,” I says “ It ain’t everybody’s pipe by any manner of means. There’s few owns characters capable of standing up against a pipe built that way. The pipe ain’t doing you no good taking up room in your shop. Why not ‘ave done with it and give it to me, saying nothing about the

THE PIPE

number of gentlemen I 'ave recommended your baccy to ? "

'Mr Purt larfed, but said that, though sorry, he didn't see his way clear to meet my views; and I were just going out of his shop with the ounce of baccy he 'ad given me willing and unasked, when the lucky draw come to my mind.

'Then and there I told 'im all about the bazaar, and arter I 'ad had several 'art to 'art talks with him, and parson 'ad been in to say I was telling the gospel-truth and nothing but it, he gave the pipe into parson's 'ands free gratis without asking so much as a ha'penny but only that his generous action should be knowed by all.

'In doo course the bazaar came off at the school, and thanks is well enough in their way but a 'ard-working man can't live on 'em. By the time that there bazaar 'ad been opened by prayer and afterwards by old Lady 'Iggins, I were in such a state of done-upness I weren't equal to no more work, and I went off 'ome to the Young Men's Club (wot I caretakes) for a bit of a rest and think.

SALTY

' It were then that one of the most astonishint things 'appened as ever I knowed in all my life

' Up to that time, beyond thinking it ~~would~~ be a sight more useful to me than to ~~most~~, 'adn't given a thought to Mr Purt's pipe, ~~but~~ a I sat there all alone and more than 'arf ~~asleep~~ I seemed to hear a soft voice say: "Take ticket for the pipe, Trimble!" I looked ~~round~~ but there was no one there, and I were that ~~tired~~ I dropped right off, but I were woke ^{up} by another strange voice as seemed to whisper "'Ave a go for the pipe, old friend!"

' And so, if you will believe me, it ~~went on~~ until I 'adn't got a drop o' beer or a bit o' ~~bacc~~ left. I were fair startled, I can tell you.

' At last I couldn't stand it no longer; ~~so~~ puts on my 'at and goes back to the school. The bazaar were in full swing, and parson ~~tha~~ pleased he didn't make no particular ~~objection~~ to me 'aving been away.

' "Now that you 'ave come," he says, " ~~you~~ can do a bit of the work you are being ~~paid for~~ and 'elp with the lucky draws."

' "Willing, sir," I says.

' "There's six seprit lucky draws," he ~~tell~~

THE PIPE

me. "There's a toast-rack, and a singing canary in a cage, and a beautiful silk scarf, and a bagatelle-cue, and Mr Purt's pipe, and a very 'andsome tea-cloth wot my sister has worked. You can go into the small school along with Mr Poppleford, the churchwarden, and 'elp 'im according to his orders, and then old Lady Iggins will draw the lucky winners."

"So me and Mr Poppleford went into the small school, and I says at once, "Mr Poppleford," I says, "this 'ere wants a bit of think."

"No it don't," he says, "'tis simple as pap."

"An ornary draw may be simple, I grants you," I tells 'im, "but wot we has to think out is a draw which will be honest and above-board and not leave no particular ill-feeling afterwards.

"Nonsense," he says, "you ain't got no brains, Trimble."

"Very like, sir," I says."

"Look 'ere," he says, "there's six lucky draws, no more and no less. All we wants is some paper and six 'ats. Most any 'ats will do."

"There's six 'ats 'ere 'andy," I says.

"Capital," he says. "Each of them 'ats will hold a draw."

SALTY

"One of 'em is terrible dirty," I tells 'i
"Young Webber's it are with his name wri
inside to show he ain't ashamed of it."

"That don't make no difference," he say
"Now it's like this 'ere. Let that there dir
'at of young Webber's do dooty for the 'an
some tea-cloth wot the parson's sister 'ave worke
Wot we 'ave to do is to cut up so many bits
paper as there is folks as 'ave paid their bol
for the 'andsome cloth. On them there bits
paper I shall write the names of them their
folks. I shall then fold up the bits of paper
put 'em into young Webber's dirty 'at, an
shake 'em up; and the first name as old Lad
'Iggins draws out of the 'at will be the winner."

"'Ow about the other 'ats?" I asks.

"The other 'ats," he says, "will do dooty
for the other draws."

"There's no doubt he 'ad a tidy 'ead-piece on
him, 'ad Mr Poppleford. I saw at once his plan
were a good, straight plan, and I said so, and he
were remarkably pleased.

"Now get to work and cut up the paper," he says.
"We ain't got much time."

We soon fixed up young Webber's dirty 'at.

THE PIPE

there being only five as was anxious for the 'andsome cloth, but the toast-rack and the silk scarf took longer, and by the time we 'ad finished the singing canary, I saw that something extra ought to be done.

"Look 'ere," I tells Mr Poppleford, "there's a terrible lot in for the bagatelle-cue and Mr Purt's pipe, 'ow would it be if you was to write out one lot of names and me the other?"

"Sartinly," he says, and afore very long there was the six 'ats standing in a row and loaded with their cargoes, all proper and correct.

"In comes parson with old Lady 'Iggins 'anging on to his arm; and, after Mr Poppleford had told her a few times where her dooty laid, she drawed a paper out of young Webber's dirty 'at, and I throwed the rest of that lot of papers into the fire. Selina Dawson won the 'andsome tea-cloth, and Jane Mott the toast-rack, and Thomas Stogdon the singing canary, and Mary Stokes the silk scarf, and Sarah Lasker the bagatelle-cue. Then we came to Mr Purt's pipe, and arter old Lady 'Iggins 'ad drawed a paper, parson read out, "Oliver Trimble!" He looked at me 'ard and he says, "Whv.

SALTY

Trimble, I didn't know as you 'ad gone in fo
this 'ere lucky draw."

"I paid my shilling a good hour ago," he
tells him.

"Where's the other pipe papers?" he
asks.

"In the fire," I says, "them being no good
wotsoever."

"'Tis extroinary," he says.

"I ain't surprised myself," I says.

"You ain't?" says parson.

"No," I says; and I tells 'im all about them
voices as 'ad so worried me down to the Young
Men's Club.

He allowed 'twas amazing and also wonder-
ful. "But, all the same," he says, "I don't 'arf
like it. If I 'ad knowed you was in for a lucky
draw, I sartinly shouldn't 'ave had you 'elping
in 'ere, such not being according to custom."

"I don't often get angry, but I did then—
fair rumbustious I got."

"I ain't casting no refections at you," says
parson, trying to smooth me.

"I'm upset," I says, "and I owns it. I
never looked for treatment like this 'ere. But

THE PIPE

I won't 'ave the pipe now—not if you asks me on your bended knees, I won't."

“There were a reglar to-do, and Mr Poppleford and old Lady 'Iggins both said as 'ow I oughter 'ave the pipe.

“No, I won't,” I tells 'em, “not after the cruel way parson 'ave spoke. My character is worth more than any pipe. There's poor old 'Erbert Veysey sitting in there. Give poor old 'Erbert the pipe, and make him 'appy.”

“That's 'andsome of you, Trimble,” says parson. “That's oncommon 'andsome, and I shan't forget it.”

We all went back to the bazaar, and parson read out the names of the lucky drawers one by one, and old Lady 'Iggins 'anded over the goods, saying they was well deserved and no mistake about it. When they came to Mr Purt's pipe, which were the last of all, parson said as 'ow he had a remarkable pleasant announcement for to make. “The pipe,” he says, “has been drawed lucky by our good friend, Oliver Trimble.”

There was some as larfed, but parson, after 'olding up his 'and for silence, went on, “Our good friend as I 'ave just named, out of pure kindness

THE PIPE

says, " and if ever a man won a pipe fair and square, you 'ave."

' So I 'ad, but it ain't no good talking to some. You would never believe the unkind things as was said to me, and old 'Erbert Veysey the worst of the lot. I don't know no more than anybody else why I were fated to 'ave the pipe. There's some things as nobody can onderstand. The second draw were as straight and honest as any draw that ever was drawed in this 'ere world. As for the first draw, was it my fault that, 'aving throwed the bits of paper into the fire, I could never prove as I 'adn't wrote my own name down on all of 'em ? '

VI

THE CORK

IT was a flat calm. An August sun rode high in the heavens, and Oliver Trimble and I were availing ourselves to the full of the shade which *Salty's* sagging mainsail cast.

'This 'ere corkscrew is no good,' said Olive with resignation. 'I shall 'ave to push the cork down into the bottle. It don't make no difference I ain't particular.

'Talking about corks,' he remarked genially a few seconds later, 'brings to my mind a little matter as 'appened some years ago, and which 'ad a considerable lot to do with a cork and likewise with a rich young gentleman who used to come out with me in my boat.

'This 'ere gentleman—his name were Tyke, but that weren't his fault—was uncommon small in his build, but as dapper a young feller as ever I see. He always 'ad his 'air brushed back tight and greasy to the back of his 'ead,

THE CORK

and his teeth was that clean you couldn't 'elp noticing of 'em when he larfed, which was frequent. A spirity young chap he were sure enough, and he 'ad a curious perky sort o' way with 'im that always minded me of a cock-sparrer. You couldn't 'elp liking him.

"'Ow old were he? He were just twenty-one. I knows that for a fact because he came of age sudden one day when in my boat, and behaved very 'andsome according. 'Tis curious the things which 'ave 'appened in my boat.

"'Trimble," he says one day, a-cocking his bright little eye at me. "You 'ave views on most things. Wot's your views about getting married?"

"'Well, Mr Tyke," I says, "I don't wish for to deceive you, and I ain't got no particular views."

"'Ain't you ever been married?" he asks me.

"'Why no, sir," I tells him, "though not for the want of trying on the part of a few I could name."

"'Then you must 'ave views against," he says.

THE CORK

““That don’t matter,” I tells ‘im, “if you’m small, you’m rich, and it’s the ‘art as counts.”

““You annoys me, Trimble, you old willin,” he says in his ‘appy-go-lucky way. “Wot’s the good of saying she will ‘ave me if she won’t? She ain’t likely to grow no smaller—not at her age she ain’t—and I ain’t likely to grow no bigger.”

“I told ‘im again as size didn’t really signify. “Some of the most liberal gentlemen ever knowed to me,” I says, “‘ave been pretty near as small as wot you are. All you ‘ave to do is to keep your pecker up and show the young lady wot’s wot.”

““But ‘ow?’” he says, miserable-like.
“‘Ow?’”

“I felt sorry for the young feller, so I put my wits to work, and it weren’t long afore I got an idear. I most generally do get an idear if I puts my wits to work proper.

““‘Ow would it be,” I says, “if you was to try a bit of a rampage?”

““Wot’s that?” he asks me.

““There’s all manner of different sorts of rampages according to sarcumstances.” I says.

SALTY

" but the particular sort I means is a cunnit plan as would make you out to be a considerab better man than wot you really are."

" " That ain't a rampage," he says. " rampage is kind of horgy. Wot you means is strattyjim."

" " Hexcuse me," I says, " but when I say rampage I means rampage, such being a tid bit more cunning than a strattyjim or a horg either."

" " In that case a rampage oughter be winner," says Mr Tyke, larfing.

" " You larf," I says, " but supposing I wa to hire a few young fellers as knows wot love is and these young fellers was to set upon you young lady playful, and you was to come up sudden and scatter 'em. 'Ow's that for rampage ? "

" " That ain't no good," he tells me. " My young lady is no fool, and she would see through it immediate. I ain't no fighter either, and never shall be. The only thing I can do 'emarable well is swim. I am a terrible fine swimmer, but she don't take no stock in that, not being able to swim a stroke 'erself."

THE CORK

“ ‘Old ‘ard,’ I says.

‘ I put my wits to work again, and in a few minutes I ‘ad made up as smart and tidy a rampage as mortal man ever thought on.

“ ‘Ow would it be,” I asks him, “ if you was to stimilate her to bathe off the end of the pier, you saying casual as the water was remarkable shaller—which it ain’t—and you being ‘andy to dive in off the top and salve ‘er?”

“ I ain’t a liar,” he says.

‘ I saw at once that if he were going to ‘andicap ‘issel in that way it weren’t no use wotever for me to worrit my brains thinking out rampages. I said no more, and he sat there in the stern of my boat a-frowning and biting his lips in a surprising way. After a bit, ‘owever, I saw a smile break out on his face.

“ ‘Trimble,’ he says, looking at me in a old-fashioned manner, “ you ‘ave given me an idear. ‘Aven’t you got an old punt?”

“ I ‘ave a punt,” I says.

“ Sootable for rowing in?”

“ Of course,” I says, “ and the terms is——”

“ Never mind the terms,” he says. “ I s’pose

SALTY

that there punt has a 'ole in her so as to run t
bilge away ? "

" She 'ave," I says.

" Which is made good with a cork ? "

" Natural," I says.

" Wot would 'appen," he asks, " if you w
out to sea in that there punt and the cork can
out sudden ? "

" I should ram it in again," I says.

" But supposing you couldn't," he says
" supposing as the cork were lost and you didn
'ardly know where the water were coming if
Wot would 'appen then ? "

" She would fill and sink," I tells 'im. " Bu
you are talking foolish."

" No, I ain't," he says, and then and ther
he told me his idear, which were remarkabl
cunning and no mistake, being to row the lad
out in my punt, pull out the cork when she
weren't looking, and win her 'art by swimming
in with 'er to land. " Accidents will 'appen,"
he says, " and I could sink that old punt o
yourn where she would be uncovered at low
water and you could get her again."

" I were never more shocked in all my life.

THE CORK

gave him a fair bit of my mind. I told 'im very stern as I didn't at all like the idear of 'arf-drownding a young lady as 'adn't done me no particular 'arm. I likewise mentioned the damage which he, in his selfish way, would be doing to my good old punt. I also pointed out the 'arm which would be done to my character through me 'aving sent out a boat without the cork made good.

"Your character and the rest of it can be charged as extras," says Mr Tyke. "You can name your own terms, and I can't say fairer than that."

"It always were a fault of mine to be soft-artered, and I couldn't abear to see him so low and desprit; so, in the end, I named my own terms, and it were arranged that he should take the punt if so minded—me not knowing anything at all about it—and 'arf drown the young lady according to plan. Arter all, she were, in a manner of speaking, his own young lady, and I reckoned he oughter know wot would do he good a tidy sight better than wot I did.

"I thought no more about it. I cleaned t whole thing out of my mind the same as if t

SALTY

word rampage was unbeknowed to me. I went ot earning my living and doing my dooty 'ere and there the same as if there weren't no punt lying on the beach at all, and consequently it were a fair surprise to me when one day I 'appened to notice the punt weren't in her reglar place.

' I said so to Peter Pidsley. " Blowed if some one ain't been and took my punt!" I says.

' " Why, a young gentleman and lady took 'er 'arf-an-hour back," he says. " I thought you knowed."

' " Not me," I says, " and I don't know wot things is coming to when punts can be took without so much as a with your leave or by your leave."

' I cast my eye out to sea, and it weren't long afore I picked her out. She were about 'arf-a-mile away, and a considerable further way out than where, if sunk, she would be uncovered at low water. I could make out there was two figgers aboard of 'er; and, while I was looking, I saw the arms of one of 'em waving frantic.

' " There's something 'appening in that there leaky punt of yourn," says Peter.

' Now there weren't no other boats out just

THE CORK

then, it being a time of day when most folks is 'aving their dinner, and I saw that something oughter be done. I got aboard this 'ere boat that we are in now, and hoisting the sails, made for the punt gradual. There weren't no particular 'urry, and it ain't my way to be interfering and argifyng and pushing my nose into this and that. It ain't likely I should be looked up to in the way I am if I were that sort o' feller.

— 'I saw the punt get lower and lower in the water; and, when I were still a few 'undred yards off, she sank, and there was the two figgers a-struggling in the water. So far so good; but, afore very long, it came to my mind that some-think 'ad gone considerable wrong with Mr Tyke's rampage. Instead of his swimiming along with long powerful, strokes, 'olding up the young lady, it looked to me as if it were the young lady as was 'olding him up. Wot's more, both of 'em was hollering, and no mistake about it.

I put down the hellum and, as quick as I knowed ow, sailed my boat to the spot where they was, and then the persition became more clear, and I saw my views was correct. The

SALTY

young lady were floating 'erself on the two pun
oars, and she were 'olding up Mr Tyke sur
enough.

"Quick!" she shouts. "Quick! He 'av
got cramp in his legs something terrible."

"Like lightning I lowered the sails and
pulled the boat in close, and 'ow I got 'em both
into the boat I don't know and never shall
neither. 'Owever, I did get 'em in, and in due
course landed 'em on the beach safe and comfort
able, neither of 'em saying so much as thank you
kindly.

"It were the next day as things moved. Mi
Tyke came up to me, and I were fair surprised
to see 'ow cheerful and chirpy he was.

"Trimble," he says, "'ow about your old
punt?"

"My punt," I says, "is no more, as well
you knows, you 'aving sunk 'er and in deep
water too."

"He looks at me in a curious way. "That
there cork," he says, "came out considerable
before I wanted. I never touched the cork."

"That ain't nothing to do with me," I says.

"Look 'ere," he says, "I believe you meant

SALTY

"The young lady," he says, "were so pleas at 'aving 'eld me up in the water that when asked 'er again she agreed to 'ave me."

"Lor, sirl" I says. "And you lookin more like a drownded cat than anything. B I ain't surprised. It ain't often that Oliv Trimble puts his 'and to anything as don succeed."

"That's the proper end of the yarn, and I on saw young Mr Tyke once again. That were tw year arterwards, when he came down to the 'ere parts along with his wife and baby, an likewise his wife's aunt. He were much the same to look at, but he 'adn't got near so muc sperrit as wot he 'ad afore.

"Trimble," he says to me one day, "s'pose you 'ave still got the punt as you bought with part of the money I gave you two yea ago."

"I 'ave," I tells 'im,

"I s'pose you don't want to lose 'er," he says,

"Sartinly not," I says, "though not equal to the old punt in some ways I could name."

"My wife's aunt," he says, absent-like, "is

THE CORK

remarkable fond of being rowed about in a punt."

"Not for all the money you could offer, sir," I says, very firm.

He gave a deep sigh. "I think we must be going about now," he says. "I mustn't be late for dinner. My wife's aunt don't like it."

VII

THE MASCOT

OLIVER TRIMBLE, having slacked off the main sail of the good boat *Salty*, thrust the tiller into my hand.

'There won't be no hauling and reaching about the run 'ome,' he said. 'We are righ before the wind, and a baby could sail her.'

He lit his pipe; then, after a minute's reflection, took something from his pocket.

'I suppose you don't want to buy a gorf ball?' he asked with a sheepish grin. 'I foun this one up on the gorf-course, and, judging from the gentleman's language, it ought to be a remarkable good ball. I couldn't 'elp larfing and me with the ball in my pocket all the time.'

'What?—I am surprised at a gentleman like you. 'Ow about the hundreds of 'arf rows that has been practically stole out of my pocket by reason of gentlemen playing at this 'ere gorf instead of going sailing in my

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boat. I 'ave no reason to like gorf, I can tell you. In fact, I can only mind one time when it did me any real good.'

Oliver pulled the peak of his cap over his eyes and settled himself more comfortably in his seat.

'It 'appened like this,' he went on. 'A few years ago a visitor came down to this 'ere place who were partial to playing at gorf, but likewise partial to fishing in my boat. His name were Chad, and he were a short, fat, rumbustious gentleman with a red face and 'arty manners. Being 'arf blind along of short-sightedness, he always wore blue spectacles; but there weren't nothing much else against him.'

"Trimble," he says to me one day when out in my boat. "There's an important competition up to the gorf-club to-morrow morning, with a 'andsome prize, which I should much like to win, for the party as sails the course in the fewest number of strokes. Will you carry my bag of gorf-clubs for me?"

'But I had obliged a gentleman once afore and knowed all it meant.'

"Not to be thought of, though sorry," I

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fellers that is just going to be 'anged, I climbed up to the gorf-course. Mr Chad was there, and very curious he looked, for, besides his blue spectacles, he were dressed in remarkable baggy breeches and 'ighly-coloured stockings. He 'eaved a sigh of relief when he saw me.

“Hurry up and get my gorf-clubs!” he says.

“The chap who looks after the gorf-clubs were a respectable man once. 'Arold Wad his name is.

“'Ullo, 'Arold!” I says. “I wants Mr Chad's gorf-clubs, for I am going to oblige him as a favour.”

“When I saw the bag my 'art came right up into my mouth.

“Look 'ere, 'Arold,” I says, “surely I ain't expected to carry all these 'ere gorf-clubs.”

“That's where you are wrong,” says 'Arold. “Why, 'Arry Vardon 'isself don't 'ave so many 'lubs in his bag as Mr Chad.”

“One thing,” I says, “he must be a remarkable good player.”

“What, 'Arry Vardon?”

“No,” I tells him. “I 'ave no consarn with your 'Arry Vardon. I means Mr Chad.”

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"Oh, him!" says 'Arold. "He ain't got no idear wotever, he ain't!"

"Ere was a nasty jar.

"Has he no chance wotever of winning the prize?" I asks.

"I wouldn't 'ardly say that," 'Arold tells me, "for a stupider lot of gorf-players than those here you couldn't find. Also," he says, "the worst players always 'as the best luck. Why last week an old feller 'oled out in one and remarkable pleased he were, though it cost him the price of a bottle of whisky for his caddy, which is one of the rules of gorf."

"Live and learn," I says; "I never knowed that afore."

But, just then, Mr Chad, waving frantic, caught my eye, so I staggered along to the place where he and a few was standing. Mr Chad pointed at a quiet-looking young feller wit' long 'air and no 'at.

"That good gentleman is going to scor for me, and me for him," he tells me. "I fancy he is a schoolmaster let loose for his summer 'olidays. Fortunately, he is carrying 'is own clubs, so there won't be no caddy-boy to make

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fun of your ignorance, which you can't 'elp. All you 'as to do, beyond carrying my bag, is to foller my gorf-ball with your eye so as I shan't lose it. And just put these few new balls in your pocket, and keep them for safety."

"Ardly had he finished when the let-loose schoolmaster hit his gorf-ball right up into the air, and Mr Chad, after pulling a gorf-club out of the bag in a rough way that jarred my shoulder something cruel, began worritting and flourishing with it like any play-actor. He were a fair rampager, he were!

"Stand a few inches farther back so as to give me more room!" he shouts to one.

"Oblige by not catching the tail of my eye when swinging!" he calls to another.

"'Ave the goodness to keep your mouths shut one and all! I am a good 'orse, but nervous when just come out of the stable."

At last, 'owever, he hit his gorf-ball a tidy ay along the ground and the competition were begun.

Them first few 'oles was a reverlation to my back and legs. The way Mr Chad tacked across the hills to make the mark-flags was

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extrornary, and the let-loose schoolmaster not much better. If it 'adn't been for a bottle of beer in my pocket (which, unfortunately, dldn't last long), I should 'ave been forced to give it up and go 'ome.

'Arter a bit Mr Chad says to me, "Things is going remarkable bad, Trimble. My chances of winning is rapidly receding into the blooming background. Nothing don't seem to go right. Look at this 'ere ball of mine now! Arter the fine knock I gave it it ought to be close to the 'ole. But of course it ain't. Ho, no! 'Ere 'tis on this disgraceful soft bit, just short of the green. 'Ere, let me 'ave a go at it with my 'eavy putter!"

"Very good, sir," I says. "Take your choice."

'He gave a yelp like a terrier-dog struck with a sharp flint.

"My 'eavy putter is not therel" he gas

"Lor bless my soul!" I says.

"And that is not the worst of it," he goes on, all trembling. "My 'eavy driving-mashie is not there either, or yet my 'eavy spade-nibbler or yet my 'eavy aluminyum cleek wot I use

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to get a remarkable long way when buried in rough grass! What can 'ave come to 'em all; I know they was there when we started."

"They must 'ave falled accidental out of the bag," I tells him. "But cheer up, sir, for there's plenty left."

"Ain't it 'ard?" says Mr Chad to the lets loose schoolmaster. "Ain't it cruel 'ard?"

"It are," says the schoolmaster, "but we shall make ourselves disliked, 'anging about 'ere and keeping every one back. As 'tis, the couple behind is calling out very fierce, being black with rage."

"Let them call till they drops," says Mr Chad. "'Tis like their impertinence. 'Ere, Trimble, though 'opeless, let me 'ave a go with my light putter."

In a desprit way he gave his gorf-ball a 'ard tap. It jumped on to the green, runned neat and tidy across it, and falled into the 'ole like a shot rabbit.

"Well hit, sir!" I says, clapping my 'ands.

"It were a good one, weren't it?" he says, with his face all 'appy and smiling.

His spirits rose something wonderful; but,

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before long, his temper rose too, for we 'appened to be kept waiting by the couple in front.

" 'Erel" says Mr Chad. " This is too bad, just when I was coming on to my game," and he began hollering.

" 'Forel Forel" he hollered, with his 'ands to his mouth, which is a curious 'abit gorf-players 'as when rose in their tempers.

" 'Trimblel" he says at last. " Put down my bag and run forrad. Give my compliments to them two fellers, for gentlemen I will not call them, and tell them that I 'ave called 'fore' six times."

" Like a race-'orse I 'urried forrad. One of the two in front was old Major Gravel, who sometimes comes out with me in my boat.

" Morning, major!" I says very perlite. " Mr Chad sends his compliments, and he's called 'fore' six times."

" Give Mr Chad my compliments," says the major, " and tell 'im to call 'six' four times 'or a bit of a change."

" Back I 'urried and gave the message, and Mr Chad swelled right up in his wrath.

" "Wot impudencel" he cries. " Wot

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ginerance! And 'im calling 'isself a majc
'Ow can I be expected to win when treated so
I 'ave a good mind to give up the game till su
as 'im is no more. Ah! thank goodness, th
'ave at last moved off! Give me a gorf-clu
Trimble! Give me any blooming gorf-clu
It don't matter which, for I wish I was dead

' I gave him the first gorf-club which can
to 'and. He took it without 'ardly looking
it, and gave such a 'ard knock that
broke right in two. He stared at the b
left in his 'and, sort of dazed.

"Another favourite gone," he says 'ope
lessly.

"Correct," I says.

"Where's the ball gone, Trimble?"

"'Evin knows, sir."

"It all comes of your 'aving lost my 'eav
driving-mashie."

"Very like, sir," I says.

"But when we came up to the mark-flag
there was the gorf-ball lying quiet and com
ferable about two inches from the 'ole.

"What a remarkable fine shot!" says Mi
Chad, all beaming. "Never 'ave I playec

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a better. Those last two 'oles 'as rose my 'opes considerable. I 'ave a chance arter all."

'I saw that, with proper 'elp, there was something in what he said, but 'elp was needed and no mistake. He kept shoving 'is hellum up and shoving 'is hellum down, and consequently going out to leeward and windward in a ridiculous way. 'Ow I suffered in them bunkers, and likewise among the gorse-bushes, words is onequal to stating.

"Trimble," says Mr Chad at last. "You 'ave the eye of an 'awk. You 'ave found my gof-ball every time in this 'orrid long grass and wot not. And what is more, the ball has been lying every time so as I could get at it easy. That last time when you found it beautiful on the short grass, when given up for lost in the jungle, was a fair treat."

"It must 'ave been turned fortunate by something," I tells 'im. "But your words is no more than my doo, for there's few would 'ave found it the same as I did."

"I made no mistake about your bringing me uck," he says.

"Correct," I says.

SALTY

"I will give myself every chance," he says.
"The next 'ole is knowed far and wide as the
'Ard Nut,' being remarkable difficult to crack;
so just give me one of them five new balls
'anded you for safe-keeping."

"And welcome," I says. "But it was
three you 'anded me, not five."

"I could 'ave swore 'twas five," he says.

"Then you would 'ave swore wrong," he
tells him, "for 'twas three."

We then came to the "'Ard Nut," which
was a very steep little slope built up with railway
sleepers. The gorf-balls was supposed to go
right over the top and fall on the green in the
dip beyond.

"Adn't your man better go forrad to the
top, so as he can mark where our gorf-balls
goes?" says the let-loose schoolmaster to Mr
Chad. "I 'ave a good score up to now, being
better than yours."

So forrad I went and stood on the top,
getting back my breath, like any monument.
The schoolmaster's gorf-ball stopped close
beside me, nearly striking me, and it were not
my fault that, in shifting my ground, the ball
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came against the toe of my thick boot and slithered back down the slope, unseen.

“Is it all right?” shouts the schoolmaster.

“All right, sir!” I sings out cheery. ‘Then, very quick, I climbed down to the green where Mr Chad’s gorf-ball ‘ad gone.

‘Arter the schoolmaster ‘ad at last found his ball, and ‘ad considerable sport with it; and arter he ‘ad come down to the green, and said a few old-fashioned words . . .

“Where’s my gorf-ball?” asks Mr Chad.
“I made sure it were on the green.”

“Same ‘ere,” I tells him. “I made so sure I never followed it with my eye.”

“But it ain’t on the green,” he says, sort of whimpering.

“It sartinly ain’t,” I says. “We must now all ‘ave a good look for it.”

We ‘ad a good look, but it were nowhere to be found, and Mr Chad was behaving very rampageous, when the schoolmaster sings out,—

“‘Ere ‘tis—in the ‘ole!”

Me and Mr Chad could ‘ardly believe our eyes; but the schoolmaster’s words was true. There were the little gorf-ball in the ‘ole.

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“I congratulate you,” says the schoolmaster, holding out his hand.

“I gave it a ‘arty grasp, but Mr Chad didn’t take no notice. He seemed to be in a kind of swound,

“‘Oled out in one! ‘Oled out in one!” he kept muttering as if he were in church.

At last he turned to me. “That’s the price of a bottle of whisky for you, Trimble,” he says.

“A bottle of whisky!” I says. “I couldn’t take it, sir. I ‘ave done no more than my dooty, and I ain’t wishful to be paid extra for doing my dooty.”

“You will ‘ave to take it,” he says, “for such is the rules of gorf, and not to be withstood.”

After that nothing onusual took place until we came to the last ‘ole. I were glad to get here, I can tell you, for my back and arms and ‘s and throat was onbelievable.

“Trimble,” says Mr Chad to me, “for all my good luck, and for all the let-loose schoolmaster’s bad luck at the ‘Ard Nut,’ his chances of winning this ‘ere competition proves to be the exact

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same as my own. Both of us 'ave played remarkable well, and one of us ought sartinly to take the prize, or maybe it will be a dead-'eat, which is similar to 'arf each."

' And it sartinly did look like a dead-'eat right up to the very last touch. Then, 'owever, just as the schoolmaster was knocking his ball into the 'ole, the sun 'appened to shoot out from behind a little cloud.

" You made me miss a ridiculous short putt," says the schoolmaster to me. " You ought to know better than to sneeze sudden and violent."

' I owned at once that I were remarkable sorry. " Though I ain't the first and shan't be the last to sneeze sudden and violent," I says. " It were the sun," I says.

' The next day Mr Chad came down to the beach where I was minding my boat, and I saw at once from his smiling face that all were for the best.

" Well, Trimble, you old mascot——," he begins, but I pulled him up short.

" That ain't fair language, sir," I tells him

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"not to a man who 'as to be respectful in answers."

"No offence," he says laughing. "I won the competition, the let-loose schoolman being second."

"And well deserved," I says. "What pr'ave you took, sir?"

"A matter of five pound odd," he says, "a 'ere's the extra ten bob for bringing me luc and three and six, being the price of the bot of whisky."

"I put my 'ands behind my back.

"What's the matter?" he asks.

"Nothing wotever," I tells him; "not if yo thinks ten bob and the price of a bottle of whisk fair out of a matter of five pound odd."

"Tis 'andsome," he says.

"Ho, is it?" I says. "And where would you 'ave been without me? Who lost your 'eav' putter so as you could putt middling well with the other? Who picked out the gorf-club that broke in your 'and and hit the ball right p to the 'ole? Who kept on finding your gorfalls in that there rough? Who managed that some ball or another was always there stuck up

THE MASCOT

nice and easy to hit? Who went forward, sweating and groaning, at the "'Ard Nut'? Whose 'eavy boot did the schoolmaster's ball come up against? Who was on that there green—with nobody to see—when your ball 'oled itself out in one? Who at the last 'ole sneezed sudden and——?"

"Stop!" says Mr Chad.

"I were glad to stop, for I ain't one to talk,

"What are you hinting at?" he asks.

"Nothing wotever," I says, giving him an 'armless wink.

Mr Chad turned pale.

"This is downright 'orrible," he says. "I shall 'ave to return the prize-money."

"But I ain't one to carry a joke too far. I laughed 'arty. "Cheer up, sir," I says. "I were but pulling on to your leg."

His face cleared a bit, but he still looked 'arf-doubtful.

"You won the prize as fair and square as could 'ave won it myself," I says.

He wiped his perspiring 'ead.

"You gave me quite a turn," he says. "Bu

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I ain't one to bear malice. 'Ere's your mone Trimble."

"Thankee, sir," I says.

"And, by the way," he says, "them fo' eavy gorf-clubs you lost careless is still at larg If found, I would give 'arf a crown each fo' 'em, for they are old friends."

I collected the four 'arf-crowns that ver same day. I found the four 'eavy gorf-club pushed down a rabbit-scrape. I suppose some body must 'ave found them lying about and pu' them there for neatness,

VIII

THE BEAK

'You wouldn't think, would you,' said Oliver Trimble, 'that I 'ad ever been put to jail ?'

He filled his pipe from my pouch and, having lit it, ordered me very sternly to pull aft the mainsheet and give the boat a chance to sail herself.

'I s'pose,' he continued, 'if you was to search all over the country, you wouldn't find a man less likely to 'ave been put to jail than wot I am. It ain't likely I should 'ave the job of caretaking the Young Men's Club for parson if my character weren't clear and above board, and yet, strange to tell, out of all the fellers as loaf about the beach, I am the only one who has been put away—anyhow I am the only one as will own to it.

'Of course, it weren't through any fault of mine. It mainly came about through a young feller named 'Arry—the same as now plays on the oh-boy in the band. This 'ere 'Arry were

THE BEAK

"Also," I tells 'im, "even if we knowed 'ow far it were from 'ere to the moon, we shouldn't know 'ow long a cow's tail is, cows' tails being most all colours and sizes, and no two alike."

"That don't make no difference at all," he says.

"You ain't talking up to your usual, 'Arry," I says. "You'm talking silly."

"No, I ain't," says 'Arry. "I knows 'ow many cows' tails."

"'Ow many then?" I asks 'im.

"One," says 'Arry, "purwidig he's long enough."

Now I thought this very clever of 'Arry, and, soon arterwards, something 'appened which rose him still more in my judgment, though I admits not for long.

'Arry stole a 'orse, and sold him to a gipsy 'or two pound. The 'orse was not a good 'orse by any manner of means, but Farmer Dibble ('im that the 'orse belonged to) made a rare old fuss, and had 'Arry took up and brought before the beak.

'Arry said as 'ow he 'adn't stole the 'orse. He said he 'ad found the 'orse standing abou

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lonely in a field, and the 'orse 'adn't made particular objection to coming with him. W he were walking along with the 'orse, it come his mind that he 'adn't no suitable place to k him in, and a gipsy 'appening to come al convenient, 'Arry reckoned that, findings be keepings, he 'ad a perfect right to sell the 'o for two pound if so minded, which he were.

'Arry was wot they calls remanded, but allowed he 'adn't got no real chance with th there beak, so I was considerably surpris when, a day or two afterwards, he walked in the Young Men's Club.

"Why, 'Arry," I says, cheerful-like, "thought you was somewhere else."

"Not me," says 'Arry.

"'Aye you bin let ofr then?"

"I 'ave."

"'Ow did you manage that?" I asks him

"Simple," he says. "When I were remanded, I did a terrible lot of thinking, and saw that the magistrate wanted talking firm to. When my case came on again, I up and I says 'Look 'ere, I ain't going to be set upon by the likes of you. You think, just because you are

THE BEAK

sitting up there and I'm standing down 'ere, that you can do what you likes, but you can't. Man to man, I am a better man than you are, and I advise you to do a bit o' thinking afore you treats me unfair."

"And what happened then?" I asks.

"I were let off free," says 'Arry, "without no more trouble than walking out of the court."

'I dare say you wonder what all this had to do with my going to jail, but, as a matter of fact, it had a considerable deal to do with it, as you will soon see. There were a feller down to the Young Men's Club who 'ad a nasty 'abit of speaking rude to me, and one day, after he 'ad gone a bit too far, I took 'im by the scruff of his neck and 'eaved him out into the road, such being my dooty.

'He weren't hurt nothing to speak of, and if he hadn't been a low-down, ongrateful feller, he 'ouldn't 'ave summoned me for salt and battery. However, that was what he did, and I were took p according and brought into the perliceourt.

'When the beak came in, I saw he were an

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lady on that there beach. I couldn't 'ardly believe my eyes, but I came closer inshore and I saw it were so, also that the lady were the very party I 'ave been telling you about.

' I saw at once that she stood to 'ave something exciting 'appen to her according to her wishes, and not wanting to interfere afore I were asked, I went about, but kept my weather-eye lifting, a-waiting for the time when she would cry for 'elp.

' She were sitting on the sand reading, and I judged that she wouldn't take no notice of anything until the water wet her feet. When this 'appened, she got up according to my expectations, but, instead of calling for 'elp, she only went a bit farther back and sat down again. There weren't nothing for it but to go about once more, which I did, and you would 'ardly believe it, but she repeated this 'ere performance two or three times, until her back were plumb up against the face of the cliff and she couldn't go back no farther. Then I saw my time 'ad come and I crept in 'andy.

' She were standing up then, and, though I

THE LADY

weren't near enough to see her face, I knowed wot 'er feelings must be, so I shouted out, " 'Ave no fear, mum! Trimble is 'ere!"; let down the mainsail and rowed the boat in.

' It weren't no easy job, I can tell you. The surf were terrible bad. Only a strong, brave man could 'ave done wot I done that day, but I done it. I rowed in through the breakers, and, when we grounded, I managed to hold the boat steady with an oar dug in the sand, though the strain on my arms was awful, and us shipping water over the stern most every wave.

" 'Urry up, mum! " I shouts. " Don't mind a little wet! Wade out and get in! "

' She didn't say nothing, and, as I couldn't stand the strain on my arms no longer, I 'ad to hop out and stand up to my waist in water, so as to hold the boat steady.

" 'Urry up, mum! " I shouts again.

' Still she didn't say nothing, and I tumbled to it that she were sort o' mazed, and didn't 'ardly know where she were. You can see wot a 'orrible persition it was for me. If I let go of holding my boat steady, the boat was most sure

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to turn broadside on and fill. If I didn't let ~~so~~, I couldn't 'elp the lady.

'Wot did I do? Wot would you 'ave done; Wot would any brave man 'ave done? I ~~let~~ go of the boat, jumped sudden at the lady, ~~and~~ with a mighty 'eave set her in the boat. ~~And~~ I were so quick about it all that the ~~boat~~ 'adn't 'ardly time to turn broadside on ~~arter~~ all.

'I ran out the boat, and managed to ~~climb~~ in. When we got free of the breakers I did a bit of baling, and not before it were wanted. Then I hoisted the sail. Then I turned to ~~the~~ lady.

"Don't you put yourself about, mum," I says, consoling-like, "you are quite ~~safe~~ now."

"I'm safe enough," she says, sniffing.

"You will 'ave something exciting to ~~look~~ back on anyways," I says.

"I shall," she says; but contrary to ~~her~~ usual, she didn't seem anyways talkative. It didn't make no difference to me. I ain't ~~one~~ to talk unwelcome. 'Owever, after a bit, ~~she~~ says to me sudden,—

THE LADY

““ Why did you advise me to go to that there beach ? ”

““ Excuse me, mum,” I says very perlite, “ but I didn’t.”

““ Yes, you did,” she says. “ You kept on saying yesterday as ‘ow it were the prettiest cove on the coast and deserving of a visit.”

““ So it are,” I says, “ and nobody can say to the contrary.”

She didn’t say no more, and I didn’t say no more either, until we got ‘ome. Then I says,—

““ Don’t you trouble about nothing now, mum, you being a bit upset and draggled, and natural too. I’ll look round to-morrer.”

““ Wot for ? ” she says.

““ Wot for ! ” I cries; and then and there I told her all about her real sitiuation on that there beach, and the damage done to my boat, not to mention me ‘aving stood up to my waist in water, and likely to catch my death of it. ““ Tis a merciful thing,” I says, “ that you, being sort of mazed, never knowed the peril you was in.”

““ I don’t know it now,” she says, sneering.

SALTY

"Appen you ain't aware as 'ow there's a little zigzag path, hid to the naked eye, a-running up that there cliff, which I could 'ave walked up convenient."

"I were fair took by surprise. I told her straight that I knowed nothing about her little path.

"Well," she says, "I knowed all about it, and 'tis a curious thing that I, who 'ave only been in these parts a few weeks, should know of it, and you, who 'ave lived 'ere most all your life, shouldn't."

"Yes, mum," I says. "I fully admits 'tis a curious thing, but that ain't got nothing at all to do with it. Besides, you allows the path is hid to the naked eye."

"I can't 'ardly bear to finish this 'ere yarn, but, 'aving gone so far, I s'pose I must. The lady never gave me any reward at all. She never made good the damage to my boat. She never even paid me for my time, which is well-knowned to be 'arf a crown an hour or part of an hour. Wot's more—though I don't expect a gentleman like you to believe it—she didn't come out with me in my boat any more.

THE LADY

‘ But there! Ongratefulness never surprises me. Wot surprised me were that the lady should ‘ave knowed of that little path. Being uncommon steep and hid to the naked eye, very few knows that path. I don’t suppose, in all my life, I ‘ad been up that path more than ‘arf a dozen times.

X

THE ORDEAL

As the good boat *Sally* glided out of the narrow mouth of the harbour, the strident sounds of gramophone came to our ears from one of the cottages of the Strand.

Oliver Trimble cocked his eye. 'That there is Charley Crick's grammerfone,' he said. 'I knows it by the squeaky sound. You wouldn't think an oneducated feller like Charley would waste good money on a grammerfone, would you? But you never can tell. Some folks is remarkable set on grammerfones.'

'A gentleman used to come out with me in this boat, who always brought a little grammerfone along with him and played it constant so as I could 'ardly hear the sound of my own voice. Curious, weren't it?—Just hold the tiller a minute, will you?—while I get under the lee of the sail and light my pipe. There's no

THE ORDEAL

particular object in wasting matches. Baccy?— Thankee, sir; though not meant.

‘ Talking about grammerfones and Charley Crick,’ he went on, after returning my pouch, ‘ puts me in mind of a concert I once ‘ad to do with in this ‘ere place, though there weren’t no grammerfone working at the concert, but only the ‘uman voice and the pianner.

‘ Parson came round to the Young Men’s Club wot I caretakes for him, and, “ Trimble,” he says, “ I’m a going to ‘ave a bit of a concert in the schoolroom in aid of the curate’s fund, and I want you to ‘elp.”

‘ ‘Aving played the drum in the church band, I weren’t surprised.

‘ “ Sartinly, parson,” I says. “ Young Mr Montmoreny, the new curate, is a well-meaning young feller in spite of his many faults, and deserving of a benefit. But I ain’t clear how I’m going to ‘elp, you ‘aving sold my drum careless along with the rest of the hinstryments when the church band was burst up.”

‘ He told me he weren’t re-
sort of ‘elp.” “ What I want
ays, “ is to bustle round and sell tickets.”

SALTY

With that he turned on his 'eel and left me, but it weren't many days afore I see him again. He came into the Young Men's Club bright and early one morning, and found me doing of my dooties with a sore lip through 'aving 'ad a few words the evening afore with the very same Charley Crick who owns the grammerfone we heard just now.

Though faded, you can see to this day the bit of paper which had to be pasted over the 'ole in the wall where Charley's head went through.

"What is the matter with that there wall?" parson asks me.

"I told him I were remarkable pleased that the 'ole had 'appened to catch his eye. "The walls in this 'ere club is a fair disgrace," I says. "Why, one of the fellers—Charley Crick, I think it were—'appened to lean heavy last night, and the plaster came away the same as you see. It ain't only the walls either. 'Tis the same all over alike in this 'ere club. 'Tis 'ardly fit for a respectable man to caretake, and no notice took in his wages."

Parson coughed oneasily, and said there was

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a right and proper season for most everything. "And this," he says, "is neither the time nor the place to talk about wages. What I 'ave come about is the concert. I 'ave been dis coursing with young Mr Montmorenzy about 'aving something onusually attractive to draw the people to his benefit, and he agrees with you that his swinging Indian Clubs and 'Gunger Din' is not sufficient."

"Course they ain't," I begins, but he raises his 'and for silence.

"Me and Mr Montmorenzy," he says, "thinks a few of the young fellers might give a 'armless display of boxing!"

"I were took all aback at them two parsons thinking out such a good plan.

"Just wot I 'ave been thinking myself," I says. "And two pairs of gloves belonging to the club, and ready to hand in the cupboard 'erel! Seems almost as if a 'igher power were at work, don't it?"

"And then, all of a sudden, a thought came into my mind.

"Afore I tells you wot it was, I ought to explain that, after I had put Charley Crick's

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head through the wall, my just intentions wa held over through fears of losing my job at th club; but, after we had been pulled apart, m and Charley had fixed to 'ave it out regular and proper in the corner of Fulford's field that day fortnight in the evening. It now came to me very clear that it would be mere waste for me to give Charley wot I owed him without getting no credit or anything else.

"So you like the idear," says parson.

"Natural, being my own," I says; "but there's one thing, parson. If you want this 'ere affair to be a success you must get some fellers to box that is willing to be 'urt a bit."

"But I don't want 'em to be 'urt," says parson, argifying. "Such is far from my views, 'aving a kind heart."

"I told him he weren't the only one with a kind heart. "When I says 'urt, I means 'urt and no more. When you says 'urt, you means 'urt bad. They wouldn't be 'urt bad nor nothing like it," I tells him.

"Parson's face cleared up a bit. "You means such minor casualties as is inseparable from a manly sport," he says.

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“ You takes the very words out of my mouth,” I says, “ such being my meaning and no mistake. Wot you want is scientific fellers who is agreeable to sacrifice their better feelings.”

“ That is all very good and well,” says parson, “ but I much doubt whether such as you describe is to be found in my flock.”

“ There’s two,” I says, “ and only two.”

“ Who ? ” asks parson.

“ Me and Charley Crick,” I tells him.

“ You ! ” he says.

“ Sartinly,” I says.

“ Charley Crick ! ”

“ Ondoubtedly,” I says.

“ You surprise me,” says parson.

“ I mentioned he weren’t the first I ’ad surprised and wouldn’t be the last neither. “ But you can lay to it,” I says, “ that me and Charley Crick is the only two in this ’ere place sootable to give a display the same as you want.”

“ And you would be willing to go thr this ordeal ? ” asks parson.

“ Sartinly,” I says, “ a ordeal being well knowed to stand for twelve rounds; and, speaking for self, willing to oblige, ordeal or no. Speaking

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for Charley, I ain't so sure; but, with him reckoning himself a considerable better man than wot he is, a suvrin to the winner would likely do the trick."

‘Parson frowned, and said he weren’t thinking of giving any prize. “The pleasure of ’elping a good cause along ought to be ample reward,” he says.

‘“Such is my own views,” I says, “but it takes all sorts to make a world, and Charley ain’t like me.”

‘So parson, not ’aving wot you could call a mind of his own, went away and asked a few whether they reckoned me and Charley was sootable for this ’ere ordeal. None of them had any particular objections, and some, who knowed that me and Charley was fixed already to fight proper (being wishful not to deny themselves) said we was remarkable sootable, and parson lucky to get us.

‘Young Mr Montmorenyz ’imself come round the very next day and throwed ’imself into the arrangements.

‘“The suvrin will be all right, Trimble,” he says, “and you ’ad better fix things up with

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Charley Crick immediate, so as we can let folks know, and sell a remarkable lot of tickets for this 'ere benefit of mine."

"Charley, in a manner of speaking, were agreeable. He said, in the pride of his 'art, that he could do with a suvrin.

"I didn't say anything. It ain't my way. "Who 'ad wot he calls 'is head shoved through a wall?" I says.

" 'Ow about somebody to see fair?" asks Charley, swallering his wrath.

"Young Mr Montmoreny is going to see fair, it being his benefit," I tells him.

"What!" says Charley, "and him knowing nothing about the job, and blind as any mole!"

"Take him or leave him then," I says. "And he ain't near so blind as wot you will be when I 'ave finished with you, Charley."

"So it were all arranged friendly, and, after it had been given out far and wide, the tickets began to go something extroinary. It weren't long afore they was all sold, and some more had to be wrote out for them who liked standing. I worked so desprit 'ard at selling them tickets that I 'ad no time to think about the ordeal.

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Not that that worried me. I just went along doing my dooty as ever, and selling tickets 'ere and there; but all the time I knowed within my 'art of 'arts that I could lick Charley Crick with one 'and, and no trouble neither.

"'Owever, the night afore the benefit, the ordeal were brought back to my notice in a curious way. After a 'ard day's work, I were sitting in the Young Men's Club with an 'arf-witted young feller called 'Arry, 'im being a friend o' mine. All the other chaps 'ad gone, and, hating to have time 'ang heavy on my 'ands, I took the boxing-gloves out of the cupboard where they was kept, my idear being to sew up a 'seam where one of 'em was ripped.

"“Is them the gloves you are going to use to-morrow?” asks 'Arry.

"“They are, 'Arry my lad,” I says.

"“They are uncommon soft and puddeny,” says 'Arry, taking one in his 'and and prodding it.

"“And so meant,” I tells 'im, “being more for pleasure than business.”

"“You won't 'urt Charley much with them,” says 'Arry.

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“ Not according to his deserts, I grant you, 'Arry.”

“ Charley's a bit smaller than wot you are,” says 'Arry, “ but he is remarkable 'ard, and there won't be no kicking allowed.”

“ And none required,” I says cheerful.

“ 'arf a brick in one of them gloves would make a considerable bit of difference to it,” he says.

“ 'Arry,” I says, larfing 'arty, “ I'm surprised at you. Besides,” I says, “ 'arf a brick wouldn't go into one of them gloves.”

'Arry said that 'arf a brick were only a manner of speaking. “ Any sizeable pebble would do,” he says; “ one of them sharp flints outside would do fine; and you sitting there, with a seam open, and a needle and thread in your 'and.”

He looked at me and winked, and I saw then that the poor 'arf-witted feller was not larfing, but meaning serious, and I gave him a fair old-fashioned bit of my mind. I told him I didn't 'ardly know how to sit there alongside of him, and he 'adn't got no idear wotever of fair sport.

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““ Why, if me or Charley Crick,” I says, “ was, onbeknown to ourselves, to ’ave a sharp flint the same as you say, that there ordeal wouldn’t go two rounds, and the disgrace something dreadful. It ain’t to be thought of for a moment.”

‘ My talk was such that ’Arry looked as if he was going to cry, and I felt my ’art soften towards ’im.

““ ’Arry, my lad,” I says, “ I ain’t by no means angry with you, you being ’arf-witted and sound at bottom, besides meaning remarkable friendly. And, to show my words is true, I tell you wot, ’Arry. I’m just a-going upstairs for ’arf-an-hour for to make my money agree with some of them tickets I ’ave sold; and, if you like to wait ’ere till I come down again, I shall be ’appy to stand you the price of a pint at the Mariners, and maybe something short to lay on top and show there’s no ill-feeling.”

‘ Such was my words to ’Arry, and that made vot ’appened in the ordeal next day all the more curious.

‘ I ain’t going to worrit you about the concert part of the benefit. Them concerts is all alike,

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wot with parson's sister a playing on the pianner, and "Gunger Din" being repeated, and the young lady'-elpers singing 'arty. The Indian Clubs falled remarkable flat, too; and, until the ordeal came on at the end, there weren't anything at all onusual except that the school was packed with folks as close and comferable as dead mackerel in a box.

' I never saw such a crowd, and remarkable 'igh-class some on 'em. Old Lady 'Iggins were there, of course, sitting in the middle of the front row, she 'aving a sort o' appetite for benefits and such-like; Mr Poppleford and Mr Brisk, the churchwardens, was also there, such being their dooty, along with their wives; but besides such as them, there was a terrible lot in the schoolroom who 'ad never been there afore and never will again. I never saw so many clean shirts in all my life; and the ornary folks sitting at the back and standing in the gangways, and shouting "Sit down in front!" as if they was in a theayter.

' At last me and Charley, 'aving put on our gloves, went on to the platform. We was both dressed, according to parson's views, in shirts

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and trousers and sand-shoes, and our muscles bunched up something wonderful. We was greeted with deafening applause, but young Mr Montmorenzy, he quieted the people down, and said we was to box twelve rounds, him being umpire and giving marks for skill and wot not, besides ringing the school 'and-bell whenever we was to start and stop.

‘ But there weren’t no twelve rounds about that there ordeal.

‘ Charley, with his wicked eyes bulging most out of ’is head, came rushing at me like a bull-calf. I bided my time as cool as ice, and, afore I knowed where I was his desprit action had measured my full length on the floor. But I weren’t down-’earted, not me! It were really is ondoing. Springing up more like a rubber-ball than anything else, I ducked under his guard and hit ’im remarkable scientific on the chin. I knowed from the jar to my hand that he ’ad got something to be going on with; but I didn’t expect that he would go down with a wollop that shook the schoolroom, and be counted out.

‘ That, ’owever, was wot ’appened, and I

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rowing, but there was something about the old feller which seemed to draw me to him. It may 'ave been his frank, open face and kind smile; it may 'ave been his basket; it may 'ave been the money in his pocket—whatever it was I felt drawed; and as (like many others) he seemed drawed towards me likewise, it weren't long afore I 'ad fixed up terms as was agreeable to both.

“ I launched the punt, and we got aboard, and I commenced to row along the beach close inshore.

“ ‘Ere, this won’t do,” says the old gentleman “ I want to go straight out to where the sky meets the sea.”

“ My terms will come rather dear for that sir,” I says, larfing; “ but, with the glass high and the sea like a mill-pond, there is no particular objection to going part of the way.”

“ You will ‘ave your reward,” he said, sort of solemn, so I laid a course according, and we ‘adn’t gone very far when he set to on the basket he ‘ad brought. Its cargo was, as I ‘ad reckoned, vittles, and a more sensible lot I never saw. There was a large cold fowl, and some remarkable

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fine 'am, and a big bottle of pickles, to which I owns I'm partial; also there was a wonderful lot of jam tarts, and two bottles of stimilating wine. But, what pleased me most was that everything 'ad been got ready for two. There was plates for two, and glasses for two, and knives and forks for two; all shipshape and comfortable. I felt more drawed to the old fellow than ever.

‘ He knocked the 'ead off one of them bottles in as smart and pleasant a way as ever I saw, and he started on that there fowl in a manner which fair made my mouth water. It weren’t long, 'owever, afore my just 'opes was dashed, and I knowed he 'ad no idear of real 'orspitality. There was I rowing 'ard in the 'ot sun, and there was he filling hisself with all manner of the fruits of the earth pressed down and running over, the same as they says in church.

‘ It weren’t for want of a friendly hint neither. “ Nice coloured plates them is,” I says.

“ ‘Beautiful,’ he says, bolting a slice of 'am.

“ ‘And wot a lot of 'em,’ I says; “ two large ones and two small ones.”

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““Don’t you worrit, my man,” he says.
“I shall find a use for ‘em.”

His words was gospel-true. Arter he ‘ad swallowed ‘arf the fowl, considerable ‘am, and five (which I counted) of them tarts, and arter he ‘ad washed ‘em down with a bottle of the stimilating wine, I reckoned my time ‘ad come, and I own I was fair staggered by his next move. He hove the bottle and the dirty plates over the side of the punt, knocked the ‘ead off the other bottle, and started in on the fowl again. You can believe me or no, but he went right through his feed the same as before, and he didn’t give over until all them lovely eatables was gone, barring a few crumbs in his beard, which I only mention for the sake of truthfulness.

‘All this time I ‘ad been rowing out to sea, sad and sorrowful, being ‘ardly able to believe my own eyes; but, when my last ‘ope was gone, I couldn’t stand it any longer, and I made to pull the punt round.

““Where are you going?” asks the old gentleman.

““‘Ome,” I says, very short. “I’m ‘ungry.”

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‘ He looked at me quite fierce and, “ You row out to sea,” he says, “ the same as I told you.” Then, after considerable difficulty, he managed to ship the rudder, which ’adn’t been shipped afore, and sat there, with the tiller in his ’and, steering.

‘ I didn’t much like being spoke to that way in my own punt, and, having a speaking face, I think the old feller must ’ave noticed it.

“ “ I dare say, boatman,” he says, “ you think my ’abits strange.”

“ “ Not particular,” I says. “ Most ’abits is strange.”

“ “ I ’ave to be careful,” he says. “ There’s more than a few in this ’ere world who wants to spoil my wise plans, and there’s others would like to out me for good and all. Poison is the dread weapon they uses.”

“ “ Lor, sir!” I begins.

“ “ Silence!” he shouts. “ Speak when I give you leave and not afore. I repeat that poison is the dread weapon they uses, and that is why I ’ave to fill myself with snacks of unpoisoned vittles at odd moments. Also I ’ave to swaller these ’ere pills which you sees in this ’ere little

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box. A doctor gave 'em to me to drive out the poison."

"Then and there he swallowed about a dozen of the little pills. "Now I feel 'appy and comfortable," he says. "Row on, boatman."

"I put this and that together according to my usual, and it weren't long afore I got the idear that the old gentleman were daft. The more I thought, the more sure I was of it; and, what with one thing and another, I didn't feel near so drawed to 'im as I had afore. He looked harmless enough sitting smiling in the stern of my punt, but we was well out to sea, with no boat near, and whenever I tried to turn the punt's nose towards the shore, he held her on her course with the rudder. I didn't 'arf like it, I can tell you, and things soon got worse.

""Row!" he shouts. "Row!"

""I am rowing," I says.

""Arder," he says, "much 'arder! Row till the sweat streams out of you or I'll land you one on the head with this 'ere stick," meaning the tiller in his ignorance.

"The persition were that nasty that afore long the sweat was pouring out of me according to

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his views, and then, all of a sudden, he ordered me to stop. "Pull in your paddles!" he says, meaning "Ship your oars!"

"I did so, and, afore I 'ardly knowed wot he was doing, he made a grab at the oars and hove 'em overboard.

"Now," he says, "I can tell you who I am."

"Thankee, sir," I said 'umbly; for I knowed it were no case for a 'ot temper. Wot I had to do was to smooth him down, and butter him up, and keep him steady on his rockers.

"Of course you 'ave 'eard of Neptune," he says.

"Of course I 'ave," I says. "I 'ave never seen him myself, but I mind an old sailor-man who told me that in his young days they had rare old rampages with Neptune when crossing the line."

"You are looking at him now," he says.
"I am Neptune."

"Proud to meet you, sir," I says.

"Neptune, the god of ocean!" he whispers in a 'ushed voice. Then he looked over the side of the punt. "Down there," he says,

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“where the coral-beds is, the mermaids is patiently waiting to welcome me. They 'ave been waiting for a long time, poor dears, but they won't 'ave to wait much longer.”

“Well, sir,” I says, very respectful, “if you 'ave made up your mind it ain't for the likes of me to argify with you, so I will wish you good-bye and the best of luck.”

“You are coming too,” he said; and with those words he took off his coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves, and I saw his arms were terrible big and strong, more like legs o' mutton than arms they were. He looked at me in a simply 'orrid way, and I 'ope to 'evin I shall never again feel cold shivers run up and down my back the same as I did then. “I must 'ave some one to attend on me when I go down,” he said. “I 'ave my dignity to think on.”

“Hexcuse me, sir,” I says, more 'umble than ever, “I knows your word is lor, but has come to your powerful mind I shouldn't be any good to attend on you? I 'ave never been used to that sort of thing on land, let alone at the bottom of the sea.”

“That don't matter,” he says. “I'll soon

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larn you. But I admits there is one thing which worrits me. I ain't got no trident."

"Now I own up honest that I 'adn't any clear idear as to wot this 'ere trident were, but I said very firm that we couldn't think of going down to the mermaids without a trident.

"" Why, they will never recognise you," I says. "Not without your trident, they won't, and that you can lay too."

"" I know it ain't reglar," he says with a sigh, "but it is not my fault, for I 'ave tried all the shops in the town."

"" 'Ave you tried Bill Bastard's shop in Mill Lane ?" I asks him.

"" No," he says, "I never heard of it."

"As there weren't no such shop, I weren't over and above surprised; but "Bill's is the place for tridents," I says. "Bill 'ave as tidy a lot of tridents as ever I see, and cheap too."

"" I wish I 'ad knowed afore," he says, "but 'tis too late now." Then, all of a sudden, he gave a yelp and pointed to my boat'-ook. "That will do for a trident," he says, all joyful.

"" It ain't reglar," I says. "It ain't by no

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means reglar.” I were that flustered I couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“ Hand it over,” he shouts, “ and be quick about it! We are doo, and overdoo, down below.”

‘ And then a blessed thought came to me, and, in handing him the boat’ook, I ’appened to drop it overboard accidental-like.

‘ Neptune gave a roar like a lion, and almost capsized the punt in leaning over the side. Afore he knowed wot was taking place, I were on him like lightning, and, taking him by the seat of his trousers, I sent him arter the boat’ook.

‘ It’s a fair marvel what a change water will make in a man. In ten seconds Neptune were hollering for dear life. He ’ung on to the rudder of my punt, and begged and prayed to be took aboard, the same as if there weren’t no such things as patient mermaids laying on their coral-beds. But I weren’t ’aving any more—not me! I sat there, with the tiller free in my hand, rapping his knuckles when asked for, and he had to stay where he was until a motor-launch came up and took us both aboard, with the punt in tow.

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‘ Neptune’s keeper were in that launch, and a nice young feller he were. So far as actual money went, I didn’t suffer anything particular. There are some things though that no money can make good, and I ’ave never been the same man since that day.

‘ I seems to ’ave growded older and jumpier. I can’t a-bear folks who set up to be anything out of the ornary. A gentleman came out in my boat the other day who ran a fish-’ook into his finger and said sudden that he were a philorficer. I were that shook I ’ad to ’ave a drink out of his flask and another one on top of it.

‘ When I told him the yarn about Neptune the same as I ’ave to you, this ’ere gentleman said it were well worth a extra ’arf-crown. He gave me the ’arf-crown too.’

XII

THE DUGOUT

‘MACKEREL is obstinate fish,’ grumbled Oliver Trimble, rebaiting his line. ‘Mackerel ain’t practically got no better feelings at all. There’s times when you gets tired of hauling of ’em into the boat, and there’s other times when nothing in the world is good enough for ’em, the last sort being the usual in these parts. Not but what there’s some ’uman beings as is pretty near as obstinate as mackerel, but most of ’em ’as better feelings if you can only touch their ’arts.’

His strategy was successful. He took a long drink and wiped his mouth with the hairy back of his hand.

‘The most obstinate man as I ever knowed,’ he continued, ‘was old Captain Meggit, and even he once showed better feelings when ’ard pressed. He was master of a small coasting

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crutch being a manner of speaking for a row-lock.

“ You stole a crutch out of my Norwegin dugout, you thief,” was the words he used.

‘ Of course, Mr Brisk, being treasurer to the lifeboat, hadn’t any call to steal a crutch, and he said so as simple and straight as ever I heard a man speak, but Captain Meggitt went and gave it out far and wide that Mr Brisk ’ad stole a crutch out of his boat.

‘ Well, one day ’twas blowing a tidy bit from the east, and you knows ’ow a easterly wind knocks up a nasty sea on this ’ere coast. I happened to be taking a turn early, and you may imagine my ’rrorr and surprise when I saw a boat out. It weren’t long either afore I made ’er out to be the identical Norwegin dugout wot I ’ave been talking about.

‘ I ran round to Mr Brisk’s ’ouse as hard as I could tear. He were still in bed, but, knowing me well, he soon came down.

“ What, you, old friend ? ” he says, ‘im being partial to me like most. “ What do you want ? ”

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“ ‘Tis blowing ’ard from the east, Mr Brisk,” I tells ’im.

“ What of that ? ” he says.

“ There’s a boat out,” I says, “ and making rough weather of it.”

“ Who is it ? ” he asks.

“ Captain Meggitt,” I says, “ in his Norwegian dugout, and, if we don’t rescue ’im, he’s most sure to be drownded dead inside of ’arf-an-hour.”

‘ Mr Brisk scratched his ’ead.

“ I ain’t going to rescue Captain Meggitt,” he says; “ not after his spreading it as I stole a crutch out of ’is boat.”

“ He will be drownded dead then,” I says, sort of argifying.

“ I ain’t going to ’ave out the lifeboat for the likes of ’im,” says Mr Brisk, he being treasurer to the lifeboat and much respected.

‘ I told Mr Brisk that there weren’t no need to ’ave out the lifeboat, there being nothing to hinder us from taking Jonathan’s motor-launch. he being sick in bed as I knowed, and tin of petrol in the launch at that identic moment.

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““We can’t let the old man be drownded dead, I suppose,” says Mr Brisk, sort o’ regretful.

““It don’t seem ’ardly kind, do it ?” I says. “Put yourself in his place, and think how you would feel.”

‘In the end, we got that there motor-launch under weigh without no more difficulty than knocking of a padlock or two; and, inside of ’arf-an-hour, we was running out of the ’arbour.

‘By that time it were blowing ’arder than ever; and, afore long, it came to baling, which is a job I always ’ave ’ated and always shall ’ate. ’Ow-er, I never were one to ’ang back, and Mr Brisk, once I ’ad started him, weren’t one to ’ang back either. It ain’t likely me and Mr Brisk would be respected like we are if we was ones to ang back.

““There’s one difficulty about this ’ere rescue,” says Mr Brisk as we rapidly over’auled Captain Meggitt. “He is such a wicked, obstinate old feller, I has my doubts if he will allow ’isself to be rescued.”

““I never thought of that,” I says.

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““ I must speak to 'im diplomatic,” says Mr Brisk.

““ That's the way to speak to the likes of 'im,” I says.

“ Mr Brisk hailed 'im. “ Norwegian dugout ahoy! ”

““ Launch ahoy! ” Captain Meggitt hails very proper and correct.

“ We see then that the Norwegian dugout was in a terrible bad way, and Captain Meggitt sitting up to his knees in water.

““ Good-morning! ” says Mr Brisk.

““ Morning! ” says the captain.

““ Nice day,” says Mr Brisk.

““ Yes, 'tis.”

““ And where might you be bound for, captain? ”

““ I thought of making Saxemouth,” says the captain.

““ Lor! ” says Mr Brisk, “'Tis five miles to Saxemouth, and you talks of getting there on a day like this. I likes the lines of that little craft of yours, captain, but they are too fine altogether for this 'ere weather. Besides, you are to lee-ward of Saxemouth now.”

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““Then I’ll make Biddlecombe,” says **the old man.**

““You are to leeward of Biddlecombe **now,**” says Mr Brisk, very solemn.

““Then I’ll make Pullhaven; and, if I **can’t** make Pullhaven, I’ll make Hansey Cove; **and**, if I can’t make Hansey Cove, I’ll make **Wexley Point.**”

““You’ll make cold meat,” says Mr **Brisk**, “if you stays in that crank boat. That’s **all** you’ll make—cold meat and wet too!”

“Captain Meggitt shouts out, “Don’t **you** miscall my boat, you thief—you wot **stole** a crutch out of ‘er!”

““Look ‘ere,” says Mr Brisk, very **calm**. “We ‘ave come to rescue you. Are you **going** to be rescued or no?”

““No,” says the old man.

“Just then the Norwegin dugout shipped **a big** ~~a~~ over her stern and were fairly pooped. She sink like a stone, and we ’ad considerable **difficulty** in making Captain Meggitt good **with** a boat-ook. ’Owever, we got ’im in the **launch** eventual, and he weren’t much wetter than **wot** he ’ad been afore.

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‘ We turned for ‘ome immediate, being, in a manner of speaking, disgusted. Captain Meggitt sat in the stern very quiet, a-grieving over his Norwegin dugout that he wouldn’t see no more. He didn’t say nothing at all (except for asking Mr Brisk whether he ‘ad his flask aboard, which he ‘adn’t, as I knowed myself previous)—he didn’t say nothing till we was just running down to the ‘arbour-mouth. Then he looked up and said sudden, “ Mr Brisk! ”

“ “ Yes,” says Mr Brisk.

“ “ Mr Brisk, you ‘ave saved my life,” he says.

“ “ I knows it,” says Mr Brisk.

“ “ If you and that brave feller”—meaning me—“ ‘adn’t saved my life into this ‘ere motor-launch, I should ‘ave been drownded dead.”

“ “ I knows it,” says Mr Brisk again.

“ “ I takes it kind of you to ‘ave saved my life, Mr Brisk, specially after me telling about your ‘aving stole a crutch out of my boat. I wishes to thank you, Mr Brisk,” says Captain Meggitt.

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“ ‘“ Say no more about it,” says Mr Brisk ~~in~~
very ’arty manner.

“ ‘“ But I will say more about it,” sa
Captain Meggitt. “ I wishes to give you sorr
thing as a small reward for ’aving saved ~~in~~
life.”

“ ‘“ Not by no means,” says Mr Brisk, “ ~~w~~
I done, I done willing.”

“ We was in the ’arbour by that time, an
shut off the engine.

“ ‘“ I tell you what,” says the old man, “ I ~~’~~
a very ’andsome gold ’unter-watch ’ome ~~’~~
I ’aven’t any particular use for, and I shall ~~g~~
you that there watch.”

“ Mr Brisk was a bit staggered. “ I coulc
think of it,” he says. “ Reely, Captain Meggitt
I couldn’t think of accepting of such a ’andsome
gift. What I done, I done willing.” But I ~~’~~
all the same he ’adn’t no real objections
accepting of that there gold ’unter-watch.

“ ‘“ Perhaps you are right,” says Cap~~t~~
Meggitt, “ but I tell you what. I ’ave ~~so~~
beautiful cabbages in my garden. I will ~~g~~
out a nice one, and bring you round a cable
out of my garden.”

THE DUG-OUT

‘So he gave Mr Brisk a cabbage out of 'is garden.

‘I never got anything out of 'im myself except, of course, that there crutch that—— I mean he never gave me nothing.’

XIII

THE PEWTER MUG

SOON after noon the breeze, which had been light and flukey, died away altogether, and left the good boat, *Salty*, lifting and dipping on a placid ground-swell.

Oliver Trimble knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

‘My dinner is at one o’clock sharp,’ he said, ‘and it ain’t no good your biding out ’ere a mile from ’ome at ’arf a crown an hour or part of an hour.’

He lurched heavily forward, and, having stowed the mainsail and foresail, got out the oars with a groan and began very leisurely to pull for the shore.

‘No, sir,’ he said in answer to my offer, ‘this ’ere boat wants delikit ’andling, and our ’abit in rowing stroke is too ’arty for her. You sit comferable where you are. I don’t

THE PEWTER-MUG

want no 'elp. I'll row her in by myself, such being no more than my dooty.'

'Talking about dooty,' he continued after a pause, 'I never come across anybody as did their dooty more reglar than wot I 'ave. That is why you see me a respectable man instead of very likely riding about in my own motor-car. It ain't the fellers as does their dooty as gets rewarded. Why, in all my life, I can only mind one case where I was rewarded proper for doing my dooty, and that were more of a accident than anything else.'

'It 'appened along of some atherletic sports which was got up by parson and a few, so as all the young fellers, if so minded, could run and jump and wot not instead of drinking at the Jolly Mariners. Me being parson's caretaker at the Young Men's Club and well-liked, it was but natral he should ask me to collect fun's for the prizes.

'You 'ave ondoubtedly,' he says, 'a bit o' talent, Trimble, for getting money out of them as ain't wishful to give; and this you 'ave proved up to the 'ilt; but this time 'tis for a good cause.'

THE PEWTER-MUG

book I see wot a remarkable good idear it were.

‘ Arter a receipt had been tore out, there was a bit left in the book so that I could put down afterwards, when not so pressed for time, the exact amount that particular visitor had gived. Wot I liked about it was that it were so correct. It weren’t a bit of good parson or Mr Poppleford, the churchwarden, coming along like they did over the concert, and saying, “ Trimble, you ’ave took more fun’s than you allows. Hand over! ” or it might be, “ Trimble, you ain’t took near so much as you says and is consequently robbing yourself out of your own pore pocket.” There were the little book speaking for itself, and ready to show they was entirely wrong, let alone backbiting and evil-speaking.

‘ Parson broke in on me one arternoon when I were ’aving my tea after a ’ard day’s work in this ’ere boat. He took off his ’at in a stern manner and says to me, “ I will now ’ave a bit of a ordit of them takings o’ yourn, Trimble.”

“ ‘ And welcome,’ I says, “ though, to my views, counting the money with the book is quite sufficient.”

SALTY

‘ He larfed, and did as I said. Then he turned to me with a beaming face.

“ This is ighly meritorious and satisfactory as well,” he says. “ Blowed if there ain’t near seven pound ten in the bag and the very same in the book.”

‘ I told ’im I were remarkable pleased that he were pleased.

“ System is everything in this ’ere world,” says parson, “ and to-morrow I will relieve you of these takings, and you can start and get some more. I can’t take ’em now as I ’ave to visit the sick, or so calling ’erself, though I ’as my doubts.”

‘ But he hadn’t been gone ’arf a minute afore he comes back again.

“ By the way,” he says, “ where do you keep all that money for safety ? ”

“ Tied up in this little bag,” I tells ’im, “ and put in the drawer of this table.”

“ Is there a lock to the drawer ? ” he asks.

“ Sartinly,” I says, “ being the only lock I ve, my sea-chest upstairs not ’aving any lock.”

‘ Parson larfed in a sooperior manner.

THE PEWTER-MUG

“ ‘Tis a good thing I come back,” he says. “ You couldn’t ‘ave chose a worse place—not if you had tried. That there lock ain’t no good, but even if it were it wouldn’t make a bit of difference. Being the only lock-up place you ‘ave, ‘tis the very one a thief would go to first.”

“ Thieves is onknown about ‘ere,” I tells ‘im.

“ Ho, are they ? ” says parson. “ ‘Appen you ain’t ‘eard that old Lady ’Iggins ‘ave ‘ad thieves.”

“ I sartinly haven’t,” I says, “ but I ain’t the sort as gives ear to gossip.”

“ Well, she ‘ave then,” says parson. “ I don’t say she ‘ave had ‘em bad; but several fine cockerels has been took from her poultry-run recent, so thieves must be about.”

It struck me that parson was talking wild.

“ Old Lady ’Iggins’s fowls is but fowls,” I says, “ though famed far and wide; but money is different, and no thief would come to a pore ‘ouse like this.”

“ I ain’t so sure,” argifys parson, “ you being well-knowned to have collected fun’s for

THE PEWTER-MUG

““ The putrid-mug ain’t been touched for ages,” I says. “ I ain’t got no further use for ‘im any more.”

““ The very thing,” says parson; and, taking the little bag, he ’ops up on a chair and stuffs it into the putrid-mug. “ Therel ” he says. “ That’s a far safer ’iding-place than any lock-up drawer. All you ’ave to do now is to keep your mouth tight shut about it.” And, with that, orf he goes again to visit the sick, rubbing his ’ands with satisfaction.

“ Now, that very evening, I were sitting alone in the club-room along with a red-headed chap, Alf Puddicombe by name, and a ’arf-witted young feller called ’Arry (as I may ’ave mentioned afore), when talk was turned on to the atherletic sports. Alf said they was a good idear and deserving of support, him being a speedy runner and reckoning to win the ’arf-mile in a canter.

““ You’m right, Alf,” I says. “ They ain’t by no means a bad idear for them as wins the prizes, and I’m a-going to run in the vetrans’ ‘undred yards over 45 myself. ’Ow about you, ’Arry ? ”

THE PEWTER-MUG

chickens," said 'Arry. "But seven pound ten is another cup o' tea. Where might you 'appen to keep the takings, Oliver?"

"I larfed, for 'ere was 'Arry playing right into my 'ands, so as I could show how to keep my mouth tight shut.

"In that there lock-up drawer," I says, pointing to it, "and the key safe in my pocket."

"Then Alf Puddicombe said he must be off 'ome by reason of his missus expecting him; and, arter he 'ad gone, 'Arry turned to me very mysterious, and whispered,—

"If the 'ouse-door was left on the jar, and a thief got that seven pound ten, it would mean three pound fifteen shilling for two."

I stared at 'im in amazement. "Rubbish," I says. "It would mean seven pound ten for the thief."

"Not if I was the thief," said 'Arry.

His words, though soft spoke, struck me like a blinding flash o' fork lightning.

"'Ow dare you?" I cries. "'Ow dare you speak to a 'onest man the same as you 'ave?"

SALTY

there he see a dim light. To his surprise the door was on the jar, and, looking in, he saw a feller a-standing by my table. At sight of 'Arry this 'ere feller made a sudden dash and, knocking him over, vanished in the darkness.

““ Ho! ” I says, very short, when he 'ad finished, “and wot might that screwdriver you borrhored be doing in your 'and, 'Arry ? ”

““ I brought it along for self-defence, 'aving no other wepin,” says 'Arry, “and, though I 'ardly likes to breathe it, the feller I see were remarkable like Alf Puddicombe.”

““ Alf Puddicombe! ” I cries.

““ Yes,” he says. “ I never see a chap more like Alf, ginger 'air and all. And now I'll be 'orf, asking no thanks, and leaving the screwdriver, which is more yours than mine.”

“ When he were gone I crept cautious to the dresser and took down the putrid-mug, and I fair larfed with joy when I see the little bag were all correct. Then, as I knowed there could be no more sleep for me that night, I made myself a 'ot cup of tea, and sat myself on guard turning the 'ole onpleasant business over and over in my mind.

THE PEWTER-MUG

‘ It weren’t long afore I see plain that the **only** right and proper plan was to tell parson the ‘ole truth come wot may. Arter all, the **takings** weren’t gone; and, except for the **extror**nary fact (which I never ‘ave and never shall understand) that I ’ad left the door on the jar, I weren’t by no means to blame.

‘ But there weren’t no particular reason why I **should** be blamed at all, so I just stepped **outside** while all were quiet and, wrapping a **dish-cloth** round my ‘and pushed, it through the **winder** so that the broken pieces falled inside **on the** floor. Then I sat on guard again, hour **after** hour, as quiet as any old cat waiting for a **mouse**.

‘ ‘Owever, nothing particular didn’t ‘appen till parson come round in the morning. I thought he would ‘ave bin overjoyed to hear the **takings** was safe, his plan with the putrid-mug ‘aving made such good weather of it. But parsons is onreliable, and such was not the **case**.

‘ Arter looking at the broke winder and the **bust** drawer, he sat down and buried his face in his ‘ands.

SALTY

“ I would rather—far rather,” he says, “ that the takings had been lost accidental, me 'aving to make 'em good out of my own pocket, than think that two of my flock is capable of wot you say.”

“ “ It ain’t your fault,” I tells 'im cheerful. ‘ There’s some as will never learn, 'owever good their teacher.”

“ “ I fear so,” he says, “ but after all I 'ave done, it ain’t encouraging.” Then he turns to me with a kind look in his eye. “ There’s one who 'as done his dooty, and that’s you, Trimble,” he says. “ I don’t see 'ow you could 'ave done more than you 'ave done.”

“ “ Thank you for them 'andsome words,” I says, “ and I 'opes these 'ere rheumatics I have caught through creeping down and sitting on guard with a broken winder, won’t get no worse, though maybe deserving of a bigger start in the vetrans’ 'undred yards over 45 than wot you may think proper. And now,” I says, “ if agreeable, I will 'and over the takings, not being wishful of more trouble.”

‘ With that I went to the dresser and

THE PEWTER-MUG

took down the putrid-mug with the bag in it.

“ It were a wonderful good, safe plan o’ yourn, parson,” I says.

‘ When he cast his eyes on the bag, even parson couldn’t ’elp chuckling to think of his own smartness. Then he gave it a shake, and, ’astily untying the string, poured out wot was inside.

‘ Near seven pound ten it should ’ave been, but near seven pound ten it were not, and nothing like it neither. Three bob in coppers and a few screws was all that come out of that bag—ornary screws!

‘ If I ’ad had a feather ’andy, I could have knocked parson down with it; and if he ’ad had one ’andy, he could have knocked me down. We was both exactly alike, with our faces all white and our jaws dropping something dreadful.

“ I never told a living, breathing soul, so ’elp me god,” I says in a low voice so soon as I could give tongue.

‘ Parson grasped my ’and. “ Say no more, Trimble,” he says. “ Your character ain’t

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stained at all. 'Tis my fault and mine alon though the lock-up drawer wouldn't 'ave be no better."

"Your 'igh opinion," I says, "is sufficie reward."

'And that were practically the end of t 'ole affair.'

'No, sir,' replied Oliver, resting on his o to light his pipe, 'nobody didn't suf much.

'You see,' he went on, 'Alf Puddicom 'ad, from his youth up, been a respectable n with a large family, and Sarah Puddicombe te her oath on the Reverlations afore Mr Pop ford, the churchwarden, that Alf, being 'usband, had been in bed all night long accord to his usual good 'abits.

"'Ow about 'Arry? Well, suspicions very black against 'Arry—natrally they v with him in the Club at dead o' night, and screwdriver in his very 'and, and screws fo in the bag and all. But 'Arry and his lodgi was searched without finding no more t three 'arf-crowns in an old stocking, and

THE PEWTER-MUG

weren't near enough to persecute him for. Besides, 'Arry being 'arf-witted, he weren't sootable to persecute proper.

'Was I ever rewarded beyond parson's high opinion? Well, in a manner o' speaking, I was, though it were months afore it took place, and then in a very curious way.

'I were turning out my old sea-chest one day, whistling cheerful as if nothing were about to 'appen, when my 'and struck a 'ard parcel, which, being opened, I found to 'ave inside seven pound five and six in silver, including three gold suvrins.

'My 'eart come into my mouth, for I ain't one to deceive myself, and I knowed at once that this 'ere comparatively modrit sum must be the missing takings—and nothing else.

“'Ow did they get there? You may well ask. I asked myself the same question thousands o' times without ever getting a proper answer; but, long arterwards, I were talking about the case to a scientific old gentleman in this 'ere boat (in confidence I were talking to him the same as I am to you), and he said I must 'ave been sleep-walking.

THE PEWTER-MUG

never come acrost such a gentleman fer questions.
Yes, me and Alf did win—easy too.

‘ In fact, wot with the takings, and the vetrans’
prize, and old Lady ’Iggins’s—I mean wot
with one thing and another—I made a tidy
reach of it about that time.

THE OTTER

name, and uncommon liberal with his baccy), and he once says to me, "Trimble," he says, "you works too 'ard. You ought to 'ave a day's oliday."

"I knows that," I says, "and well I knows it too; but, 'aving to earn my living, the word 'oliday is unbeknowed to me."

"Look 'ere," he tells me, "to-morrow the otter-ounds meets up to Holecombe Bridge, which is convenient and near, and a day along with 'em would do you a power of good."

"Very like, sir," I says, "and the precious day a-running itself to seed like any old cabbage without so much as one single 'arf-crown coming in."

"If you like to come with me," he says, "I'll see to your vittles, and maybe find you a couple of 'arf-crowns as well."

"You are very good, sir," I says, "but not having been on a 'orse's back since I were a boy, and then only a cart-'orse——"

"There ain't no 'orse-back to it," he says, larfing, "but only walking; and a otter ought to be in your line, he being more than 'arf a fish through eating so many of 'em."

THE OTTER

‘Now an otter-’unt is like this. The dogs splashes along a shaller stream, and the master walks alongside of ’em on the bank, making curious noises in his throat when so minded. The ’untsman comes next, with his ’orn, so as to be ’andy for the master to cuss at. Then comes the regular dressed-up ’unders, some of ’em being throwed out to port and starboard in case the otter should make a bolt. Last of all the ornary folks comes walking, they ’aving no job except so to do.

‘We ’unted along in this way for a mile or two, and nothing particular didn’t ’appen until we came to a bridge, and then I saw that all the ’unders which I had noticed at the start in their carriages and traps had drove round by the road and was waiting for us, cool and comfortable, and good judges too. The ’untsman blowed on his ’orn to the dogs, and the master had a drink out of his flask, and I ’ad a pint of beer at a public-’ouse which were ’andy.

‘On went the ’unt and me with it, and it must ’ave been the beer which brought it to my mind that it were stupid, and nothing but it, for them dogs to think a smell would lie in

SALTY

running water, so, without saying anything to Mr 'Odge, I ran forrad to the master, and I says, "Hexcuse me, sir, but them dogs will never smell anything in running water, and that you can lay to."

'He didn't say anything, but he looked me up and down, and he looked my stick up and down, and, if looks could 'ave killed, I should 'ave been a dead man then and there. Mr 'Odge, when he came up, was remarkable upset. He told me I was wrong about the smell, and that what the dogs were looking for was ridges of sand where the otter might 'ave been lying in the sun and leaving his smell so as to be 'unted. "Also," he says, "you must on no account argify with the master, he knowing wot's wot more than all the rest put together; though I reckons myself," he says, "he 'ave made considerable many mistakes in 'unting this 'ere stream the way he 'ave."

'Soon afterwards we came to another bridge, and there was the 'unders in their carriages and traps waiting cool and comfortable the same s afore, and the 'untsman blowed on his 'orn to he dogs the same as afore, and the master had a

THE OTTER

drink out of his flask the same as afore, and I had a pint of beer the same as afore at another public-ouse which, thank 'evins, were 'andy.

‘On went the ‘unt again and me with it, but, by this time I was feeling very tired, and said so.

““Why, ‘tis splendid,” says Mr ‘Odge. “Don’t you feel nothing of the spirit of the chase?”

““Not remarkable,” I says, “and there don’t seem to be anything to chase except a smell which don’t seem to be there.”

‘But just then we heard the dogs, which had got a good way in front, start yapping a bit out of their usual.

““The dogs is talking now sure enough,” says Mr ‘Odge, “but I reckon from the sound of ‘em that it ain’t a otter they ‘ave winded, but a fox. There’s no call to hurry.”

““Right you are, sir,” I says. “I’m agreeable.” But it weren’t more than a minute afterwards when he calls out very excited, “I was wrong. ‘Tis a otter sure enough by the sound of ‘em. Hurry, man, hurry for all you’re worth, or we shall be too late.”

THE OTTER

including me, did not, and it were just then something chanced to catch my eye.

‘ It were a ’ornit’s nest. Now I may not be a wonderful ’unter, but I know a ’ornit’s nest when I sees one, and I knows also the ’abits of ’ornits when worried. I thought of the master and his ’ard, rude ways. I thought of the poor little otter, swimming this way and that under the water to escape from the cruel ’unders and their dogs; and while I were so thinking I ’appened to lean ’eavy on my stick, and I knowed it were time to be orf, and quick about it too.

‘ I had a long, ’ot walk home by myself, and I were that done up it was as much as I could do to get out my boat next day. ’Owever, I did so, not liking to disappoint Mr ’Odge, who had engaged me previous.

‘ When he came down to the beach I saw his face was swelled up peculiar.

“ ‘ What a day! ” he says.

“ ‘ It are a fine day, sir,” I says.

“ ‘ I mean yesterday,” he says. “ Where was you at the finish ? ”

“ ‘ Well, sir,” I says, “ my ’art is that so

THE OTTER

“ Except to the poor little animal himself,”
I says; “ but better luck next time, sir.”

“ I don’t exactly want another ‘unt as ‘ot
as wot yesterday was,” he says, dabbing his sore
face with his ‘andkerchiff.

“ It were an ‘otter ‘unt than what you
bargained for,” I says.

‘ I ain’t one to talk light, and it weren’t until
afterwards (when I was thinking over my words),
that I saw what a capital joke I had made.

‘ Larf! I never larfed so much in all my life.’

XV

THE RING

OLIVER TRIMBLE, owner of the good boat *Salty*, looked sourly after an old lady of prim appearance, who, disregarding his invitation to go for a sail, had asked him to oblige her with small change for a florin.

‘Yes,’ he grunted, in answer to my question, ‘I did give her the correct change—and she took it! A gentleman like you would ‘ardly believe it.’

And it was not until, leaving the boat to grill alone in the midsummer sun, we had half emptied two tankards of the Jolly Mariners’ cool beer that he regained his accustomed equanimity.

‘Ladies is funny,’ he said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. ‘Yes, ladies is ondoubtedly funny, being remarkable like women. Some says different, but to my mind

THE RING

all females is much of a muchness. I know what I am talking about too; for I don't suppose any other boat of the same size anywhere 'as had 'arf nor quarter so many ladies sick in her as what my boat *Salty* has.

' Some 'as been drawed to me by reason of my moderate charges and perlite 'abits; dozens on account of my honest blue eyes; and hundreds along of my being a 'arty old salt and not one of them perishing longshoremen.

' There was one lady (I think I 'ave mentioned her before) who took a particular fancy to me owing to this 'ere beard of mine, which put her in mind of her diseased 'usband.

' There was another (and a nice-looking bit she was too!) who said to me sudden one day when we was about two mile out to sea, "Boatman," she says, "if you don't kiss me I shall drown myself!"

' Did I kiss 'er? Well, it ain't likely I should let a lady drown 'erself out of my boat, is it? I owns I were shook though; and I were altogether sorry when she was took back to t. asylum.

THE RING

‘ And so on, till I were fair done up with explaining that all these ’ere ornary things was but ’uman nature, and onable to ’elp themselves.

‘ We were sailing up the river one day, for a bit of a change (instead of in the bay) and she gave tongue according to her usual,—

“ ‘ Ain’t it wonderful, boatman, how wide the river is ? ”

“ ‘ Not at all, being ’igh-water,’ ” I says.

“ ‘ And what a wonderful long bridge we ave just come under! ” she says.

“ ‘ He is as he was built,’ ” I says, “ and none of these ’ere wonders of yours is near so wonderful as a little thing like that diamond ring you keep twisting about on your finger.”

“ ‘ Why so ? ” she asks with a yawn.

‘ Now yawning is a bad symptim for them as likes to keep their boats neat and clean; but, knowing Mrs Art’s gift well, I ’adn’t got no fears.

“ ‘ Because,’ ” I tells ’er with a larf, “ your little ring is worth money, and clouds and doo-drops and such like is not.”

SALTY

““ What a old 'eathen you are,” she says, joking-like. “ Not but what you're correct about the little ring, for it is worth a considerable deal of money and no mistake about that, I ain't one to wear rings at all, except my wedding-ring and keeper; but my dear 'usband, Mr 'Art (who is working hard in the diamond trade up to Lunnon), gave me this ring when we was 'appily united; and this very day is the hanniversary, being the fifteenth of June exactly fifteen years ago.”

With that she twiddled the ring right off her finger and gave it a solemncholy kiss; but I was kept from saying more by reason of the skipper of one o' them clay-barges (which was coming down the river on the port tack) shouting to me in a 'arsh manner.

Sauce from skippers of clay-barges on port tacks is no new thing to me, but, Mrs 'Art being present, I was 'andicapped; and what with sootable words rising in my throat and me having to force 'em back again, it was only out of the corner of my eye that I sort of felt 'er put the diamond ring on the seat of the boat.

THE RING

‘And then things ’appened. I suddenly noticed that the clay-barge had shortened sail; also I saw the skipper aforesaid pointing with his ’and down the river, and never to my dying day shall I forget the sight I then see.

‘The bridge were fair blotted out to the naked eye; and, though we was still running afore a light breeze, a thick, black sheet o’ weather was coming up the river, with the water churned up like surf on a bar.

‘But I ain’t one to lose my head. I shouldn’t be ’ere now, just finishing a pint of very good beer, if I was that sort.

‘I gybed immediate so as to bring the boat head to wind. Then very quiet, so as not to alarm Mrs ’Art in ’er ignorance, I quickly shoved the tiller into her ’and.

“Keep her as she is,” I says in a ’oarse whisper, “for both our lives depends on your action now.”

‘Then, like any race-’orse, I jumped forrad, let the mainsail down in a reglar smother, cast loose the foresail, and ’eaved the anchor overboard.

THE RING

if I hadn't kept my weather-eye lifting and been extroinary quick with the sails and anchor, we should now be bottom up, if not filled and sunk."

"Wonderful!" she says. "I never saw a finer sight. 'Ow gusty! What a wind!"

"Wind," I says. "That weren't wind."

"Gale then," she says.

"It weren't a gale either," I says. "It were more of a typhoon, or you might say a tornader; and I dare say 'undreds, if not more, has perished."

"Anyhow it were very wonderful," she says. "What are you going to do now?"

"I told her I was going to row 'ome without no delay. "Typhoons," I says, "as you may not be aware on, makes a 'abit of travelling in circles like a kitten arter 'is own tail. That there typhoon may be doo back any minute."

"So I plugs away at the oars without wasting no more breath, and, though nothing particular didn't 'appen, it was not afore we were below the bridge that I eased up and lit my pipe.

SALTY

‘ While I were so doing, Mrs ’Art. in stern, gave a bit of a scream.

“ Where’s my ring ? ” she cried.

“ On your finger, I reckons,” I says.

“ No, it ain’t,” she says, vigorously shaking her bonnet. “ I put it on the seat.”

“ I believe you are right,” I owns at or “ I sort o’ fancied you put it on the seat. was just when I thought the skipper of the clay-barge was saucing me, though such was the case, his words being meant kind and to the typhoon. Whatever made you put diamond ring on the seat, mum ? ”

“ I was going to hand it to you to look at she says, “ directly you ’ad finished your hal-cation with the skipper of the clay-barge; then the typhoon came along. But where my diamond ring now ? It ain’t on the seat where I put it.”

“ Of course it ain’t,” I tells ’er; “ a considerable deal ’as took place since you put ring on the seat, a seat being a remarkably stupid place for to put a vallyable ring for keeping.”

“ Search, search ! ” she jerks out in a des-

THE RING

way. "With all this mess of sails in the boat, it may be hid."

"All in good time," I says cheerful. "It ain't no good searching now, but, when we gets to shore, I will make a thorough good search. You ain't got no call to worrit, the ring must be somewhere."

So, when we got ashore, I behaved as promised. I took the sails out of the boat and spread them on the shingle; I took up the floor-boards and, with my tin can, baled out every drop o' water from the well. But there weren't no diamond ring come to light, nor nothing like it neither.

All this time Mrs 'Art had been sitting on a crab-basket (as 'er dress showed afterwards by reason of tar), squeezing her own 'ands till the blood pretty near came, and taking a power of interest.

"It ain't 'ere," I tells 'er at last. "I 'ave searched thorough."

"Dear, dear, dear!" she says. "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Well, there you 'ave me, mum," I says. "Rewards is, of course, usual."

THE RING

'arf pound that mackerel were, and the young gentleman ighly pleased.

'When I was stringing the catch up for him to take away, he says to me, "I ain't particular set on mackerel, Trimble, as I reckons they are very poisonous to the insides, so I will just take a couple home to my wife, and you can eat the big one yourself."

'Young gentlemen is often foolish. Mackerel is not poisonous to the insides, though better ate without wasting no time. So I took the mackerel and ate 'im fried to my tea, and a very tidy mackerel he were.

'But the remarkable thing was that when I opened that onusually large mackerel for to clean 'im, there, lying quiet and comferable in his stummick like any Jonah, were—what do you think?—You would never guess. Blowed if it weren't a diamond ring!

'I opened my eyes I can tell you; they must 'ave looked more like saucers than eyes. But they had not deceived me. A diamond ring it were, and wot's more, if not mistook, it were

SALTY

the same identical ring that Mrs 'Art 'ad lost up the river.

'Talk about wonderfull! Did anybody ever hear of such a thing? Not only 'ad a mackerel, forsaking his usual 'abits, strayed up the river; not only 'ad this 'ere mackerel swallered Mrs 'Art's diamond ring, but this 'ere very same mackerel 'ad, days arterwards, 'ooked 'isself back into the very same boat that the ring by rights belonged to.

'Owever, as I may 'ave mentioned before, I ain't one to waste the precious minutes wondering at this and that when dooty calls, and 'ere was dooty at it again. So, after 'aving my tea, I gave myself and the ring a bit of a clean, and ran round to Mrs 'Art's lodgings.

"Mrs 'Art," I says, "I 'ave something to tell you, but it ain't nothing to be alarmed at."

"That's a good thing," she says.

"And then I 'eaved the good news at her in slabs.

"Ain't it wonderful?" I asks her.

"It are indeed," she says.

THE RING

““ And about the reward ? ” I says. “ Twenty pound, though nothing in writing, was mentioned as between man and man.”

“ She then asked to cast her eye over the ring ; and, having no objections wot-ever, I took it out of my pocket and 'eld it up.

““ Very pretty,” she says. “ Very pretty indeed! But it ain’t my ring ! ”

“ Ere was a nice old slap in the face. Not her ring indeed! I was fair took aback. I 'ardly knowed wot to say for the best.

““ Not your ring ! ” I got out at last. “ 'Ow can you say so, Mrs 'Art, with all the evidence the other way fit for any perlice-court ? Besides,” I says, “ the ring is vallyable, and you natrally anxious to 'ave it back.”

““ It ain’t my ring,” she tells me. “ Whether vallyable or not, I don’t neither know nor care.”

“ I looked at 'er very steady.

““ Do I onderstand you to say you makes no claim whatever to this 'ere diamond ring ? ” I asks her.

SALTY

“Natrally,” she says, “it not being mine,” and, with them words, she opened the door to me.

‘Ardly knowing whether I were on my ‘ead or my ‘eels, I stumbled home; and, having put the ring where it would be safe, I began what was to prove weeks of anxious turning over in the mind. Never in all my life had I come acrost such a peculiar persition, and the more I turned it over the more I couldn’t onderstand it.

‘Owever, a month afterwards a few gleams of light was throwed on the black darkness by a pimply-faced feller as I didn’t know from Adam, who turned up sudden in these ‘ere parts, and began to ask me questions.

“I am down ‘ere,” he tells me, “to make inquiry about a sartin diamond ring which a sartin Mrs ‘Art takes her bible-oath was lost out of a sartin boat recent, you being present for a witness.”

“Ho!” I says very short.

“There ain’t no need to bristle,” he says. No harm is meant to you, but on the contrary,

THE RING

our time being vallyable this time of the year."

‘Then he shoved three ’arf-crowns into my hand, and I told ’im straight that, if his questions was fair and above-board, I hadn’t any particular objection to answering ’em. In the end he had the whole story of how the ring was lost as good and true as I knowed it myself.

“‘So the ring ’as never been found?’” he sked when I had finished.

“‘According to the best of my information and, so ’elp me god, no—a thousand times, no!’” says.

‘After that, him being a well-meaning feller, we went and ’ad a drop of something short at his expense, and, when he ’ad mellered ’imself a bit, I asked ’im why he was worritting about the ring.

“‘Do you know what hinsurance means?’” he asks.

“‘Few better,’” I says. “‘Some has it for fires, but most for funerals.’”

“‘That’s so,’” he says; “‘but there’s other kinds; and Mrs ’Art had hinsured this ’ere diamond ring against being lost, stolen, or

THE RING

Plymouth races, there was a bit of a crowd. I swear I felt the ring in my pocket just afore I got out of the train. There must 'ave been a fate about that ring.'

'Yes, sir,' replied Oliver, 'the ring were stole from me. Ain't I just told you so? I never saw it again. I never saw Mrs 'Art again either. But I once told these 'ere facts to a lawyer-gentleman with a remarkable big head, who was trying for bass out of my boat, and he says to me,—

"Well, Trimble," he says, "if your character was not well-known I should 'ave judged your words was totally ontrue. I should have said that, when the typhoon hit the boat you grabbed the diamond ring off the seat, so as to get a reward. But being wot you are," he says, "such thoughts ain't possible."

Such was the lawyer-gentleman's 'andsome words to me, and he went on to say that anyhow he reckoned Mrs 'Art were a bad lot, and meant to lose the ring;

SALTY

along so as to get the two 'undred pounds.

" " Of course," he tells me, " afore Mrs 'Art could hinsure the ring she would 'ave had to prove it were worth the money; but, if her 'usband was fortunately situated in the diamond trade, all things was possible and a mere fleabite. Very likely the ring weren't 'ardly worth nothing, or it may be less.

" " Or perhaps Mrs 'Art came out with you ready armed with a cheap ring to lose, she keeping the two 'undred pound ring safe 'ome, and flaunting in Lunnon with it now, when no hinsurance fellers is about—let alone two 'undred pound in her pocket!"

" " Lor bless my soul!" I says. " Such goings on fair takes my breath. Ain't they wonderful?"

" " Why, no," says the lawyer-gentleman. " Such things is done in business every day; but I tell you what is wonderful. 'Tis wonderful a mackerel should be found agreeable to swallering a diamond ring and likewise equal to so doing."

THE RING

““ Mackerel is oncommon veracious,” I says.

““ In that case,” he says with a ’arty larf, “they must be remarkable like you.”

‘And he heaved me over a ’am-sand-wich.’

XVI

THE FANTERSEE

THE good boat *Salty*, was sailing close-hauled through a bucketing sea, and it was, perhaps, my own fault that, when Oliver Trimble gybed, the mainsail-boom, swinging over, hit my face.

‘Of course it weren’t meant,’ said Oliver severely when I had finished speaking. ‘I can’t abear rudeness and equally I can’t abear them as can’t larf when a joke tells against themselves.

‘An old gentleman once came out with me in this ’ere boat; and “Trimble!” he says to me. “Are you aware that we are all sprung from monkeys?”

“Very like, sir,” I says, “but I reckons some has sprung a good deal further than others.” And, larfing, I made as if to pick a flea out of his whiskers.

‘The old gentleman were remarkable similar face to a monkey, and you would have thought

THE FANTERSEE

he would be amused. He weren't, though!—in fact, he gave me the rough side of his tongue in a very 'appy-go-lucky manner.

'In a manner of speaking, there's few 'as been hit 'ard more frequent than me,' continued Oliver after a meditative pause. 'Over and over again my trusting nature has wasted the pull my extra brains gives me. But am I soured? Not by no means! In fact, I sometimes smile thinking of the pleasure I 'ave given others.

'A very curious case of wot I 'ave just said comes to my mind, and, if you like, I will tell you about it, hoping it will 'elp to move the solemncholy look from your face where the boom unfortunately caught it.

'One day, a few weeks afore last Christmas, parson, follerin a frequent 'abit of his, 'came round to the Young Men's Club, wot I caretakes for 'im, and I saw at once from his bright eyes and the quick way he was breathing that something onpleasant was about to take place.

'I took the bull by the 'orns.

“If 'tis a bazaar, or a concert, or

SALTY

temperance-meeting in the schoolroom," says, "take my advice and let sleeping-dog lie."

"You are smart," he says, "aren't you?"

"Not particular," I says. "When yo pants like that I know wot to expect, and, being a 'ard-working man, I ain't wishful for extra labour, let alone Christmas a time of peace and goodwill."

Parson bristled up. "Your tongue is too forrad, Trimble," he says. "Besides, you are mistook. It ain't a bazaar, nor yet a concert nor yet a temperance-meeting which I 'ave in view."

"Wot is it then?" I asks.

"'Ave you ever heard tell of a fantersee?" he asks.

"No, I ain't," I tells 'im. "Do it carry extra work for me?"

He 'emmed and 'awed. "In a manner o speaking, I suppose it do," he says.

"With no extra pay?"

"I ain't given that any consideration," he says.

THE FANTERSEE

“ “ I reckoned so,” I says, larfing very bitter.
“ No extra pay! Of course not! Ho, no!”

‘ Parson worked himself up.

“ “ Blowed if your tongue ain’t a onruly member!” he bursts out. “ Remarkable onruly it are, and no mistake! I don’t ’arf like it, with you my caretaker and all. I expect cheerful and willing service, and, if you ain’t satisfied to be my caretaker, there’s several as would like the job, and so I tell you.”

“ Ere was a pretty way to talk. He fair made my blood boil, and I gave ’im a regular bit of my mind.

“ “ I don’t ’ardly think you does me fair credit, sir,” I says, very stern. “ Me having been your caretaker all these long years and ’elping willing with all extras, it ain’t likely I should start being ongrateful now. Times and again I ’ave showed to the contrary.”

‘ Parson were fair astonished at me taking the wind out of his sails like this.

“ “ Very good, Trimble,” he says in a moderate way. “ Very good.”

“ “ And about this ’ere fantersee?” I asks.

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“ Well, 'tis like this,” he tells me. “ I means to 'ave a bit of a entertainment on Christmas Eve; and, now that the church band is burst up, carols leaves the church three-parts empty. We 'ave never 'ad a fantersee afore.”

“ But what is it ? ” I asks. “ Don't beat about the bush, parson ! I don't suppose 'tis anything to be ashamed of.”

“ Course it ain't,” he says. “ A fantersee is just play-acting with all the wickedness took out. I 'ave wrote one out myself, which my purpose is to 'ave performed in the schoolroom.”

“ Bravo ! ” I says. “ Capital ! ”

“ I hope it will prove instructive and amusing,” he says, rubbing his 'ands.

“ Sartin sure to be,” I says. “ Who will do the acting, parson ? ”

“ You for one,” he says.

“ Wot, me ? ” I cries.

“ Yes, you,” he says; “ and Mr Poppleford and Mr Brisk, the churchwardens, and some of the young lady'-elpers—let alone ornary folks like Thomas Stogdon and Selina Gawson and 'Ikla Mott. So you won't be alone by yourself,” he says.

THE FANTERSEE

‘I were regular surprised. “Is all them really going to make fools of themselves?” I asks him.

“Sartinly,” says parson.

“‘Ave they took their bible-oaths so to do?”

“Sartinly,” he says.

“In that case,” I says, “I don’t see my way clear to refuse, though fantersees is not in my line. Shall we ‘ave to dress up, parson?”

“Yes and no,” he tells me. “You will, and at the same time you won’t. The fantersee is like this. All you actors will sit in a row on the platform and pretend to be letters and such-like that has been sent through the post. Do you grub my meaning?”

“Not full,” I tells ‘im.

“Well, take Niklas Mott,” he says. “Niklas will act a letter from a missionary in Orstralia, telling his doings in them furrin parts. Take Thomas Stogdon. Thomas will act a circular from a Lad’s ‘Ome asking for subscriptions. Mr Brisk will be one of them pamphlets setting out the advantages of temperance. And, so as the lighter side shan’t be

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wanting, Selina Gawson will act a slice wedding-cake in a box, and Mr Poppleford has kindly consented to be a white rat ~~sel~~ improper through the post."

" 'Ow about me ? " I asks.

" Well," says parson, " Mr Poppleford ~~was~~ strongly in favour of making you a bottle of poison meant wicked; but I pointed out ~~you~~ have your feelings the same as decent folk, so we 'ave arranged for you to act a funny ol' parcel returned through the dead-letter offic— which ought to cause 'armless amusement."

" A worse-tempered man than me would ~~have~~ drawed back at such words, but I never was ~~on~~ to spoil sport.

" 'Ave it your own way," I says. " But I tell you straight I don't understand the fantersee 'Ow Selina Gawson, with her figger, can ac a slice o' wedding-cake in a box fair beat me."

" Parson said it were quite simple.

" Selina Gawson," he says, " will 'ave large card pinned to 'er front-part with, ' stands for a slice of wedding-cake in a box' wrot

THE FANTERSEE

very bold on it so as all can read. Similarly all the actors will 'ave cards saying what they stands for."

" "Hol" I says. " And what will my card say ? "

" "Arf a minute!" says parson. " I 'ave the words 'ere in my pocket-book along with the others. Ah! 'Ere 'tis. '*Gone away!* *No address!* *Not known and totally refused!*' That's yours."

" "Look 'ere, parson," I tells 'im. " Though wishful as ever to oblige, this 'ere fantersee-acting is too much for me. I ain't any ways equal to it. I ain't got the eddication for it."

" "Nonsense," he says in a very 'arty manner. " Why, all that you and the other actors has to do is to sit in a row with your cards showing. All the hard work will fall on me. I shall come along dressed up as a postman——"

" "Lor' bless my soul!" I says. " You a postman, parson!"

" "Sartinly," he says. " I 'ave hired a regul: proper soot of postman's clothes from Hexet so as to raise a loud larf. (Wot's the matt

SALTY

with you? You ain't took bad, are you?) Well, as I was saying, I shall go along the row of actors in my postman's soot and pretend to open the letters and what-not, saying a few words over each, and causing smiles and tears like a April day."

"And wot then?" I asks.

"Nothing then," he tells me, "unless you counts my sister at the pianner. The fantersee will be over, and there won't be no more required."

"Well, the fantersee come off in doo course, and a more ridiklus business I never come acrost in all my life. At first there was considerable larfter at seeing us actors all drawed up in a row with 'umerus cards pinned to our front-parts, and when parson ran on to the platform in his postman's soot, he got a 'arty greeting from them as didn't know no better, but it weren't long afore the folks saw 'ow wicked they 'ad been deceived, and that a fantersee were only a lot o' sermons with us actors for texts.

"By the time parson 'ad finished with Niklas Mott (who come from the missionary in

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to the Jolly Mariners to wash the ~~on~~
taste out of my mouth.

‘ Being there, I got into talk with a feller called ’Arry (I may ’ave mentioned afore—’arf-witted he is, and plays the beautiful in the town band), and, being ’ardships, it were but natural that I shou tongue to them.

‘ ’Arry took a sight of interest—rem interest he took. He said it were a sha

“ But, look ’ere, Oliver,” he says. Christmas time, and one good turn d another. If so be you are agreeable to st me a pint now, I’m a going up to Hexe Boxing Day for to pass the time o’ day w cousin Dan Pukkle, who lives there. be ’appy for to return the parcel for yo paying my fare, and nothing said abo extra ’arf-crown.”

‘ I see at once that ’Arry’s views was from both sides, so, having stood ’im th we went along to the Young Men’s Clu I ’anded over the soot. “ And mind you back a receipt for it,” I tells ’im, “ so as show it to parson.”

THE FANTERSEE

“ All right,” says 'Arry, and orf he goes, and I saw no more of him till late on Boxing Day evening. He then burst in on me in 'igh spirits, with his face flushed nasty and other signs.

“ 'Arry,” I says, “ you 'ave been drinking, and if it weren't for your being 'arf-witted and easy upset I should judge you 'ad been drinking heavy. Have a cup of this 'ere 'ot tea I have just made to clear my head.”

'Arry sat down and cackled like a hen, swallering the cup of 'ot tea.

“ You are right,” he says. “ Never 'ave I had a better day than wot I 'ave had to-day.”

“ I suppose your cousin, Dan Pukkle, showed proper Christmas spirit,” I says.

“ Not 'im,” says 'Arry. “ Stout and bitter was all Dan showed, and not much of that.” And he went orf into another cackle, holding 'is sides with both hands.

“ I will tell you all about it,” he says at last; “ for though better to 'old my tongue, I must tell somebody or burst.”

Then he told me that, arter he 'ad got out

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of the train at Hexeter, he was thinking 'curious it were that he should be doing a ki action, when two postmen collecting Christma Boxes 'appened to catch his eye.

' At first he didn't take no particular noti but it came to him gradual that there was ' and my postman's soot and Boxing Day, together in the same place at one and t same time; and (being only 'arf-baked, so much as that), he seemed to see t finger of Providence pointing straight at h and saying, "'Arry, my lad, now's yo chance!"

' He hurried along to his cousin, Dan Pukkl 'ouse, and Dan gave him the stout-and-bit along with a 'arty welcome. Also Dan lin up with Providence very kind and ready, a helped 'Arry to wash his face, and put on a postman's soot. Likewise Dan showed 'Arry a sootable road to collect the Christmas-Bo from.

' 'Arry were unlucky—so he told me—at place he first tried. The 'ouse had a push-bit as well as a knocker, and, being naturally ir 'urry, he tried both. Arter a long time

THE FANTERSEE

remarkable 'andsome gal come to the door and asked him wot he wanted.

“ I 'ave called for a Christmas-Box according to usual, it being Boxing-Day,” 'Arry said, touching my postman's 'at very perlite.

She throwed her head up in a 'orty manner. “ You ought to be ashamed of yourself,” she told him, “ making all that noise. Ain't you aware this is a 'ouse of mourning ? ”

“ Why, no, miss,” said poor 'Arry, took all aback.

“ Well, it are then,” the 'andsome gal said. “ And a pretty postman you must be not to know the same with the old gentleman turned a 'undred-and-three and the pride o' this 'ere city—let alone the front winder-blinds pulled down so that all can see.”

'Arry said he were very sorry to 'ear that. He asked her pleasant what the old gentleman 'ad unfortunately died of, and she said it weren't nothing at all serious.

“ But that is no excuse whatever for you making such a terrible noise,” she said. And she slammed the door very loud on him.

‘ Poor 'Arry were a bit dornted, and the nex

SALTY

'ouse dornted him again, for he 'ad a *nasty* worritting time with a baggage of a 'ousemaid who 'ad been walking out with the *regular* postman. 'Owever, it didn't cost nothing, him promising to take 'er to the pictures; after which he moved on sharp, and sailed immediate into good weather.

'Take it all round—'Arry said—it were easy work. The ground, fortunately, hadn't been scratched before; and, with 'arf-crowns frequent, he might 'ave made a real *fortune* if it 'adn't been that, looking cautious round a corner, he caught sight of them two postmen. As 'twas he did remarkable well, and his *cousin*, Dan Pukkle, weren't 'arf-pleased at 'andling his share.

'When he 'ad finished the yarn, 'Arry, *in* 'is ignorance, looked at me proud.

"“And I 'ave got the receipt for your *soot* Oliver,” he says, “signed at the shop *regla* and proper and all correct. 'Tis in my *pocke* somwheres.”

“Then he got the surprise of his life. I jus went to the door and locked it, and put the *ke* in my pocket.

THE FANTERSEE

“What is that for?” ’Arry asked.

“Why, ’Arry, my lad,” I says to him very quiet, “you don’t think you are going out of his room with all that money in your pocket.”

“Yes, I do,” he says. “I earned it fair and square, all by my natural gifts.”

“Wot!” I says vigorously. “’Ow can you say so, ’Arry? Didn’t I lend you the loan o’ ny postman’s soot?”

A nasty, sullen look crept over his face. ‘Dan Pukkle were a ’eavy drain,” he says. ‘I ain’t going to share out no more—and so I tells you.”

‘Ere was nice words to be spoke to a ’onest man! My better feelings was hurt like lemon-juice on a sprayed finger—dreadful they was hurt!

“Share out!” I cries in a regular to-do. “There won’t be no sharing out. You are mistook by your own failings, ’Arry; but I ain’t going to ’ave my character dragged through the mud. Every ’apenny must be handed over to me ’ere and now.”

“Likely,” says ’Arry, shooting his tongue in a rude manner.

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“I shall then hand every 'apenny over to parson,” I goes on. “And parson will hand every 'apenny over to the poor postmen you 'ave robbed, them being a deserving class.”

‘Arry said he 'adn't been born yesterday; and I was forced to look him in the eyes very steady, the same as lion-tamers does. 'Owever, I were a tidy bit stronger than him; and, in the end, reglar cowed, his pockets was all turned out.

‘Would you believe it? The only thing in all his pockets was that there receipt! 'Arry must have gone 'ome and turned his pockets out afore he come round to me at all. He must 'ave knowed my 'onest character almost better than I knowed it myself.

‘Arry were a remarkable young feller, though well-knowned to be 'arf-witted. I believe the Christmas-Box idear struck his mind directly I first mentioned my postman's soot at the Mariners. I believe that, when he went to Hexeter, he knowed exactly wot his plans was. 'Ow quick! 'Ow clever! 'Ow extrornary quick and clever!

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‘I never bore him no ill-feeling. We ain’t all built alike. Everybody can’t ’ave a character like mine. Often and often I ’ave larfed to think of me ’aving a postman’s soot ready to ’and, and the idear of Christmas-Boxes not so much as crossing my mind.’

XVII

THE MATCH-MAKER

IT seldom needed much effort to persuade Oliver Trimble that beer was indicated. That worthy man, convinced of being the best-liked and most dependable man on the beach, was generally willing to give his competitors a chance by leaving his boat to take care of herself. On this particular occasion we had the cool tap-room of the Jolly Mariners to ourselves; for the landlord, after supplying our wants, had withdrawn with the thoughtful intimation that a shout would bring him back again.

Oliver carefully blew away the foam from his tankard, and half-emptied it at a draught.

“ ‘Arty good wishes, sir!’ he said with a benevolent grin. ‘I am a single man myself and always shall be; but I ‘ave nothing wotever to say against a gentleman like you getting married if so inclined—in fact, I often thinks

THE MATCH-MAKER

if gentlemen had never got married, there wouldn't be no reglar supply of customers for my boat. All I can say is I hope you will never be sorry. Most gentlemen is only sorry once, and that is always.'

He filled his pipe with great deliberation, and, having lit it, smoked solemnly.

'A curious case of this 'ere getting married once came before my notice,' he continued presently, 'and perhaps, being in the 'appy state you are, you would like to hear about it.

'It 'appened along of a single gentleman, Crump by name, who came to live in this 'ere parts. He were a middle-aged gentleman, but, being well-off and not having 'ad no wear and tear, he looked younger than what he really was. He were very tall in height, and 'ad a remarkable lot of yellow 'air, and a tuft of the same sprouting out of his chin, but good company he were not, his words being few, and him keeping 'issel to 'issel in a way you couldn't help noticing. I were, consequently, all the more surprised when one day, while fishing for dabs in my boat, he 'opened his 'art right out to me.

THE MATCH-MAKER

“ “ That’s orkward,” I says.

“ “ It are,” he says, pulling at his yellow beard, which was a frequent ’abit with him. “ What is your advice, Trimble ? ”

“ “ The shivers,” I tells ’im, “ is only to be got over by practice. You ought to mix with the sect and get used to their curious ways. I often takes ladies out in my boat, and it would do you a power of good to come on some of them trips.”

“ “ That ain’t a bad idear,” he says.

“ “ Turn it over in your mind, sir,” I says.

“ So he turned it over, and, afore long, he followed my advice and several times came out in my boat along with the sect. Sometimes there was three or four, and other times I worked it so as there was only one of ’em.

“ At first he suffered dreadful, and I often wondered how his yellow beard could stand the constant pulling without coming away from its moorings; but, arter a bit, I noticed he was improving, and I told him so, and he owned my views was correct and the shivers not near so bad as what they had been.

SALTY

““There’s nothing like practice,” I
“but you should be more forrard, sir. S
alongside the sect is not enough. You
talk to ‘em!”

““Is that reglar?” he asks me.

““Of course it are,” I tells ‘im. “Be
and cheerful, and pass the time of day.”

‘He did as I told ‘im, and, so correct w
views, that, afore many weeks was sped, I
him tell a young woman to lean well ov
side of the boat as natural and pleasan
could have done it myself.

““Trimble,” he says to me when v
come ashore, “your advice has been wo
in all particulars. I felt quite comf
to-day, except when that sick girl dro
’at-pin into my face.”

““Capital!” I says. “Capital!”

““I feel now,” he says, “that if I
ome acrost a sootable ’elpmate, I sho
equal to her. But gals is no good to me.
I want is a quiet, comfortable, ‘andsome,
good-tempered lady who is past her fir
nd ondoubtedly of independent mean

““That sort is scarce,” I tells ‘im.

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“ “ If you was to find me one,” he says, “ it would mean a matter of ten pound in your pocket. I sometimes think a widder would be agreeable. ’Aving been bitterly disappointed once, a widder wouldn’t expect too much.”

“ “ With or without children ? ” I asks.

“ “ I ain’t particular as to one or two,” he says.

“ “ ’Ow about eddication ? ”

“ “ That don’t make no difference,” he says.

“ “ ’Ow about her station in life ? ”

“ “ I shouldn’t take no notice of that,” he says, “ so long as she came up to specification in other ways.”

“ “ Very good, sir,” I says. “ You leave the whole matter in my ’ands, and I will see wot can be done.”

‘ Now you may think I was talking rash, but that is not my way. Directly the word widder had left Mr Crump’s lips, my thoughts had turned immediate to Melia Tidd.

‘ This ’ere Melia Tidd had been born in this place thirty or more years before, she being the only orfspring of Wopham, the butcher. You

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can see his shop in the Strand now, though, owing to Wopham being dead, he don't keep it 'isself now.

'Butcher's orfsprings is well knowed to be 'andsome, and this 'ere Melia kept strictly to the rule. She growed up into a fine upstanding parcel with a lot of black 'air and eyes like sloes; and Wopham was remarkable proud of her, and 'ad her dressed and eddicated beyond 'er station.

'In the end a 'ighly respectable old visitor, named Tidd, falled a victim to her, and she went off with him, and no more was heard of her for years; but, a few months afore Mr Crump started worritting, she had come back and set 'erself up as a private widder in a small cottage.

'Of course I knowed 'er, and I drawed myself to her notice, and she were very affable. She told me that, though she had good money coming in regular, she were not proud; and, so long as I didn't call her Melia, I could touch my 'at to 'er pretty near as often as I felt inclined.

'So 'ere was a wepin ready to my 'and, and

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a very tidy wepin too, for, though broadened **out** in her lines, Melia was as 'andsome as ever.

' My job were, of course, a delikit one, but **I** knowed well how to tackle a delikit job. **I** just smoked my pipe at her front-gate till she came out and told me to go away.

“ You little knows wot you are sending away, Melia,” I tells 'er.

“ I am sending away a lazy, loafing long-shoreman. And don't call me Melia!” she says with a 'orty toss of 'er head.

“ Melia,” I says, “ you are sending away **a** angel onawares, and one who 'as come to bring **you** luck.” And I turned my back on her very cold, and walked off.

‘ As per usual my views was correct. I hadn't gone more than a few yards when she called me back and explained her words was but a manner of speaking.

“ And 'ow about this 'ere luck?” she asks.

‘ I then talked to her quiet and, arter mentiong 'ow well she and the garden was looking the rain 'aving done good, I told her I had :

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well-orf gentleman (and 'andsome to some tastes), who were on the look-out for a sootable 'elpmate.

“ And what 'as that to do with me? ” she asks.

“ A considerable bit, ” I tells her, “ for you, being a widder, is naturally on the look-out too. ”

“ I ain’t saying the business was settled there and then, and I won’t worrit you with all the argifying and back-talk which took place afore Melia falled in with my views, but there is few knows more about the sect than me, and, within a fortnight, she ’ad come to heel and promised to pay me a matter of ten pound when the banns were put up.

“ The next time I met Mr Crump, I drawed him out of the 'ot sun into the shadder of a bathing-machine, and in a low voice—more of a whisper than anything else—told him 'ow the land laid.

“ And you couldn’t do better, ” I says, “ for a more 'andsome, comferable widder-lady don’t hardly breathe. Wopham, the butcher—being er father—was respected something remarkable, and she ’as good money coming in regular. ”

THE MATCH-MAKER

‘ Mr Crump scratched his head.

“ This comes a bit sudden,” he says.

“ All good things comes sudden,” I says.

“ Has she any children ? ” he asks.

“ No, she ain’t,” I says, “ but you said particular you didn’t mind whether she had or no.”

“ I were but asking,” he says, mopping his face with his ‘andkerchiff. “ If she fills the bill in other ways, I will ‘ave a fling at ‘er.”

‘ You might think my work were then pretty near finished, but such was not the case. Mr Crump’s idear of ‘aving a fling was fair ridiculous, and Melia didn’t give me anything like the ‘elp you might expect.

“ Look ‘ere, Melia,” I says to ‘er a few weeks afterwards. “ According to my views you ain’t getting no forrader.”

“ Don’t call me Melia,” she says. “ And ‘ow can I get forrader with you always in the boat, listening with your mouth open ? ”

“ Ridiculous ! ” I tells ‘er. “ Over and over again I ‘ave told you both to take no notice of me and behave as your ‘arts tells you. ‘Owever, I says, “ to-morrow I will put you both ashore

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somewheres, and you 'ad better bring one of them spirit-kettles so as to make a cup of 'ot tea and show how 'ome-like you are."

‘ You will now 'ave no difficulty in understanding the persition next day. There was Mr Crump and Melia and the spirit-kettle sitting on one side of a very big lump of rock; and on the other side, 'arf-asleep, so as I could just hear and no more, was me. You can judge how relieved I were when I caught the following talk,—

“ Well, 'ow about it ? ” asks Mr Crump.

“ About wot ? ” says Melia with a 'umerous laugh.

“ You knows,” he says in a 'usky voice.

“ I don't, says she. “ I've no idear wot you are alluding to.

“ Yes, you 'ave,” says he, argifyng, “ and you also knows my unfortunate 'atred for your sect. But somehow you ain't the same but different.”

“ 'Ow can that be ? ” she asks.

“ Blowed if I know,” he says, “ but there 'tis. You 'ardly gives me the shivers at all.”

“ Flatterer! ” she says.

THE MATCH-MAKER

“ ‘Tis gospel truth,” he says ‘oarsely. “ Will you ‘ave me, Melia ? ”

“ ‘Sartinly,” she says. “ And I don’t suppose you are as bad as you seems.”

‘ I could ’ardly keep myself from rushing round the rock and wishing them joy, but I knowed it wouldn’t be a delikit thing to do; so I just crept away to my boat on my ‘ands and knees, took the floor-boards up, and baled ’er out with my tin can. When the ’appy couple came down, there was I sitting patient in the stern.

‘ Now you would think—wouldn’t you ?—that there was nothing left but to put up the banns and hand me over the ten pounds each. Far from it ! As day followed day I began to grow oneasy, and in the end, being forced to ask Mr Crump for a pound or two on account, I found my worst fears was all too true.

“ ‘Trimble,” says Mr Crump, “ I can’t do it. I ‘ave tried ‘ard and honest, but I can’t bring myself to do it.”

‘ My blood began to boil. “ You ought to be ashamed,” I tells him.

SALTY

“ ‘I am,’ he says, “ but there ‘tis, and I can’t ‘elp it.”

“ ‘But you can’t get out of it like this,’ I says. “ ‘Ow about your goings on?’ —I looks at him very stern—“ Ain’t you ever spoke out to the lady?’ ”

“ ‘No,’ he says, very red in the face and pulling frantic at his beard.

My blood boiled right over. Turning on my ‘eel, I strode right away to Melia’s cottage, where she ‘appened to be in the garden.

“ ‘Look ‘ere, Melia!’ I says, “ ‘ow about a pound or two on account?’ ”

“ ‘On account of what?’ ” she says. “ And don’t call me Melia.”

“ ‘On account of the banns, Melia,’ I says.

“ ‘There won’t be no banns,’ she says.

Then she burst into tears and told me Mr Crump ‘ad treated her bad, he ‘aving refused to put up the banns after asking her fair and quare when in company with the spirit-kettle.

“ ‘Pull yourself together, and dry them tears, Melia,’ I says kindly. “ All is not lost for, if I ain’t mistook, this is a reglar case of breach and promise.”

THE MATCH-MAKER

““No, it isn’t,” she says, with her whole body shook with emotions. “I ’ave already been to Mr Cheadle, the lawyer, and he says I haven’t got a leg to stand on.”

““’Ow so, Melia?” I says.

““There ain’t no evidence,” she says. “Them breach and promises has to be full of it—and don’t call me Melia!”

““Not so fast, Melia,” I says. “Ain’t Mr Crump wrote you no love-letters?”

““Not him!” she says.

““’Ow about me and my bible-oath?” I says.

““You!” she cries in surprise. “All you could say is that we ’ave been out together in your boat. That isn’t near enough.”

““Ain’t it?” I says with a laugh. “Then ’ow about my very own ears ’aving ’eard Mr Crump’s very own voice ask you to ’ave him?”

““You are joking!” she says.

““Not me!” I says. “I were ’arf-asleep n the other side of that rock when the fata words passed his lips.”

“Melia dried ’er tears.

SALTY

““This is ighly important,” she says. “You and me must go straight to Mr Cheadle, the lawyer, without wasting so much as a minute.”

““Both 'appy and willing,” I says.

“So, arter she had 'anded over a few pounds on account and promised the rest for next day, off we went to Mr Cheadle, the lawyer, and he was remarkable pleased, and said he would persecute Mr Crump immediate.

“Not long after that Mr Crump came up to me one day when sitting in my boat, and, “‘Ere's a pretty to-do, Trimble,” he says. “Blowed if Mrs Tidd ain't persecuting me for breach and promise.”

“I told 'im I weren't surprised. “In a manner of speaking you 'ave laid yourself open to her, and 'tis no more than you deserve,” I says.

““She is a fair terror,” he says. “Her terms is so unreasonable too.”

““Ho!” I says. “She 'olds out terms 'hen.”

““She do,” he tells me. “I 'ave offered no ss than a 'undred pound to be let go free, but she won't take less than two.”

SALTY

“Cheer up, sir!” I tells him. “Into the witness-box I must go according to the lor; but, when there, all that mortal man can do for you shall be done.”

‘So, arter he had ‘anded me over a matter of fifteen pound—ten for ‘aving found him a sootable ‘elpmate and five for him ‘aving treated her bad and me as well—I set my wits to work; and when the breach and promise come along at Hexeter Assizes, how well they had worked was showed.

‘Perlice-courts, sooner or later, comes to all; and all perlice-courts, except for the fellers being dressed up different, is much of a muchness. A perlice-court was no new thing to me, and I took my bible-oath as steady as a rock, and throwed a ‘arty look at Melia and another one at Mr Crump. Melia’s lawyer (not Mr Cheadle, but the one in the wig) was remarkable pleased, I can tell you, when I said the words I ‘ad heard behind the rock, the same as I ‘ave to you.

‘Then Mr Crump’s lawyer’s turn came.

‘“Was you wide awake when behind this ere rock?” he asks me.

THE MATCH-MAKER

““Sartinly not,” I tells him. “I were ‘arf-asleep, being fair done up with ‘ard work. If not ‘arf asleep I should not ‘ave been behind the rock, for it ain’t my ‘abit to give ear to private talk. I shouldn’t be respected the same as I am if I was that sort.”

““Then the words did not come to you clear?” says the lawyer, very affable.

““There you’m wrong,” I says. “The words come to me very clear—remarkable clear they come. It ain’t the words I can’t swear to.”

““There’s something you can’t swear to then?” says the lawyer.

““Of course there is,” I says.

““Wot is it?” he asks.

““The lady,” I tells him.

““Wot do you mean?” asks the old judge, butting in unwanted.

““’Tis like this, your worship,” I says very steady, “Mr Crump is well-known to be partial to the sect, and he has been in company with so many in my boat that I sartinly couldn’t swear which particular female-lady the word was spoke to.”

SALTY

“ You ’ad better take good ’eed wot you say,” raps out the old judge.

“ I am taking good ’eed,” I raps out in reply; “ for well I knows my dooty, which is to do my best for both parties according to the lor without no fear nor yet no favour. And this,” I says in a ’oarse whisper, “ I will do, ’evin ’elping me, to the bitter end.”

And, arter this, such was the force of my words, the breach and promise came to a sudden end.

“ Look ’ere,” says the old judge to the jury-fellers. “ Arter what this upright man has swore to, there ain’t ’ardly enough evidence to swing a tabby-cat. What you gentlemen has to do is to bring in ‘Not Guilty,’ and I won’t listen to nothing else.

“ You are discharged,” he says, turning to Mr Crump; “ but I tell you plain that, though no evidence wotever, I ’ave my doubts. Don’t come before me again, or it will be the worse for you. Your character ain’t by no means what it should be, and there’s them in ’umbler ’alks” (and he points at me) “ that you might well take a lesson from.”

THE MATCH-MAKER

““No, sir,” said Oliver, when his tankard had been refilled and his pipe relit. “That ain’t exactly the end of the yarn, though it ought to be. The real end only shows ’ow ridiculous this ’ere ’uman life is.

““You would ’ardly think—would you?—that, in spite of all my trouble, Mr Crump would go and marry Melia Tidd after all. That, ’owever, is what he did, for, after the breach and promise, seeing her dissolved into tears on the railway-platform, waiting for a train to take her ’ome, his ’art was that touched he took her up to London instead, and the rest was done at one of them registry-offices.

“That was years ago, and a good deal has took place since then. A few days ago I met ’im in the village.

““Wot’s the matter with your eye, sir?” I asks him.

““Nothing much,” he says with a poor attempt at a larf. “One of my children ran between my legs, and, being tripped up, my eye came into contract with the fender.”

SALTY

“Never mind, sir,” I says. “You will ‘ave plenty to care for you in your old age!”

“I shall,” he says, “providing I ‘ave any old age.”—He ‘eaved a deep sigh.—“The wear and tear has been beyond my expectations,” he says.’

XVIII

THE PURSE

‘Not a penny more than three ’arf-crowns,’ protested Oliver Trimble with an engaging smile, after a sail of two hours and exactly four minutes. ‘If you was to offer me more I wouldn’t accept of it. I don’t ‘old with charity, and never ’ave neither.’

‘Talking about charity puts me in mind of a little matter as I once ’ad a considerable bit to do with, and if you likes to wait while I makes my boat ship-shape, I’ll walk along with you and tell you about it.

‘It really came about along of my rowing bow-oar in the lifeboat,’ he continued ten minutes later. ‘’Tis funny ’ow roundabout things sometimes ’appens. You must ’ave noticed it yourself.

‘One dirty night we was called out by reason of a Dutch schooner (in clay she were out of

THE PURSE

lifeboat at all, except, of course, through the streets on lifeboat day with the boat pulled by 'orses—but in 'undreds of other ways, my dooty I 'ad done, and no mention of a purse or nothing like it. It struck me forcible that, if purses was to be the rule, there was many much more deserving objects than Job Cornish and Josh Brimblecombe and Peter Pidsley and such-like; and then my thoughts turned sudden to old 'Erbert Veysey.

‘ ‘Erbert Veysey (you may remember or you may not, it don’t make no difference), ‘Erbert were an old feller as I once nearly give a pipe to out of pure kindness of ‘art. He were well-knowned by reason of his age, and long white ‘air, and perlite manners, and living respectable on a pension and wot he could pick up permiscuous, which weren’t much. I see at once that a tidy purse would do considerable good to ‘Erbert, and being at the time near his cottage wot he lived in, I bought two-pennorth of snuff (him being no smoker) and dropped in casual.

‘ “ Well, ‘Erbert,” I says, “ ‘ow goes it ? ” and I gives him the snuff.

SALTY

“I 'ave much to be thankful for,” says 'Erbert, a-stroking his white beard.

“I was thinking,” I says, “as something oughter be done for you, old friend, you being terrible old and 'aving always lived respectable.”

“Who are you a-getting at?” he asks.

“I told him I weren't getting at nobody. “There ain't been nothing in the shape of a purse rose in this 'ere place for a tidy time,” I says, “and, if 'andled proper, I reckon you'm about ripe for one.”

“Erbert cottoned on to the idear very strong, so, arter a bit of a talk, I went straight away to parson, and he said as he were glad and also pleased to see as I could think of others as well as myself.

“I will do all in my power to 'elp old 'Erbert,” says parson, “and I agrees with you there's no time like the present.”

“We both of us set to, and it weren't many days afore 'Erbert's purse were going uncommon well. There was a gentleman—Abrams his name was—as was setting up for Parliament in these 'ere parts, and he gave the extrornary

THE PURSE

andsome sum of ten pound without 'ardly being asked. Wot with this, and me and parson putting our backs into it, the purse soon came so near to eleven pound that parson said he would for once break the rules of his life and himself give the shilling and sevenpence that was wanted to make up the round figger.

““ A fine purse sure enough,” says parson to me, a-rubbing of his 'ands in a 'armless way he 'ad. “ We must now decide how to 'and it over.”

““ Well, sir,” I says, “ I ain’t one to shove in my oar unwanted, but 'Erbert being terrible old and easy upset, 'ow would it be if I was to take along the purse and give it to him on the quiet ? ”

“ Parson said that, though thoughtful, he didn’t reckon it would 'ardly do. “ We oughter 'ave a bit of a proper show 'owever small,” he says, “ if only to give a chance to Mrs Abrams, 'er being the lady of Mr Abrams wot give the ten pound. It won’t 'urt old 'Erbert to come along to the vestry for once and be given the purse reglar by Mrs Abrams, and I shall arrange according.”

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““I am that sure enough,” says 'Erbert, “and 'opes, when my time comes—and it can't be ar off now—that my good friend, Oliver Trimble, who 'as worked so 'ard for the purse, will foller long 'ard behind the corfin in a pair of 'andsome black gloves. I wishes them there gloves to be paid for out of my purse, sparing no expense and no thanks asked for.”

‘The purse was then given over to Mr Jobbins, who didn't make no particular objection, and we all went 'ome.

‘You can't trust nobody in this 'ere world. The older some folks gets, the wickeder they gets. I ain't even 'ad them black gloves. Old 'Erbert is still alive exactly the same as wot he were afore, and there's talk now of getting up another purse for 'im.’

‘ ‘Ow much money was rose for the lifeboat purse? I ain't got no idear 'ow much money was rose for the lifeboat purse.’

AFT-WORD

You can see for yourself now that wot I said at the beginning was correct.

All the things in the book is things as really 'appened to me. Some of 'em 'appened more than others, but they all 'appened.

OLIVER TRIMBLE.

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